

Jan. - Feb. 2022

Akhand Jyoti

The Light Divine



Akhand Jyoti is not merely a magazine. It is an embodiment of my soul. - Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya

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Glimpses of 'Ayush Sanvad' program organized by Uttarakhand Government at Haridwar.
Students of DSVV are seen performing at the function.

|| Om bhūrbhuvah svaḥ tatsaviturvareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt ||
(May Almighty illuminate our intellect and inspire us towards the righteous path)

- Rigveda 3/62/10; Samveda 13/4/3, Yajurveda 3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/3



Akhand Jyoti

The Light Divine

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• Mata Bhagwati Devi Sharma

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• Dr. Pranav Pandya



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Amrit Chintan

Human Life

The question arises - who is a human being and what is the purpose of his birth? The spiritual texts answer this question like this – A human being is God's prince, and he has been sent on earth to play the role of a skilled gardener to develop and nourish this garden of the world. For this purpose, he has been gifted with a robust body, brilliant mind, and superior emotions.

In psycho/scientific parlance, a human being is considered a descendent of ape-like species. If we assume this theory to be correct and spend our lives behaving like animals, what is wrong with it? In the opinion of scriptures, this theory is not valid. Indian thought considers human life to be the medium for attaining divinity. It proclaims that a man is born from the Absolute Self; he is perfect in himself and will remain incomplete without achieving perfectness.

Man's material needs are not many. Anyone with hard work and prudence can easily achieve them. If one is satisfied with it, he can find time for self-refinement and social welfare and do something better in life. However difficult be the circumstances, once the attitude changes, the state of affairs will also become favorable. If we, human beings, refine ourselves and mold ourselves befitting human dignity, this earth will transform into heaven. This is the need of the hour and our responsibility too.

- Pujya Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya



Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man. - Benjamin Franklin



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Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one. - Brad Paisley



A Testing Time for Pragya Parijans to Prove Their Eligibility

Param Pujya Gurudev writes in his autobiography 'My Life: Its Legacy and Message,' – 'While many prominent and great thinkers are apprehending annihilation, it is my emphatic prophecy that the Evil, which in reality is an inverted form of Good, will be reconverted into the original Good; that which is topsy-turvy at present will be set aright. Let this statement of mine be taken with the seriousness it deserves. The dark clouds of evil tendencies created by unbridled scientific advancement will be blown away by a forceful hurricane of divine tendencies. Darkness will be dispelled, and eternal light will shine forth. This is possible only through the irresistible and invisible power of the Rishis.' (Chapter 13, Section titled 'My Prophecy is that there will not be destruction but creation')

Though these words were written a few decades ago, there is no doubt about the prophecy of Pujya Gurudev coming true. The invisible powers, who can bring significant changes by their mere resolves, are part of this divine scheme of 'Change of Era.' Pujya Gurudev long back wrote in

Akhand Jyoti (Hindi magazine) also – 'The descent of New Golden Era is inevitable. It would be called 'Pragya Yug.' Celestial Ganga has made up its mind. Lord Shiva has spread his tresses. Now the need remains for a prince like Bhagirath. Arjuna too was told – 'If you wish, you may wear the crown of victory, otherwise sit alone. Mahabharata can be won without you as well.'

Considering today's circumstances, the question naturally arises in mind – 'Why the change is not happening that Pujya Gurudev prophesied so clearly?' On the contrary, Nature and the environment appear angry like Lord Nrusingh. Evil-mindedness, the wickedness of intent, and ill-will among people are increasing. Compared with yesteryears, the circumstances are more hostile, uncomfortable, and gruesome. It appears as if the whole world is engulfed in darkness. So, how can a new era dawn under such circumstances?

While searching for the answer to this question, it is essential to recollect the Puranic story of *Devasur Sangram*. Due to the curse of Seer Durvasa, *Devatas* (gods) lost their spiritual power. When the latter approached Lord Vishnu to suggest how to regain that power, He advised them to conduct '*Samudra Manthana*' (churning of the sea). Using the rope of snake Vasuki and the churning stick of Mount Mandara, when the task of churning was done, 14 gems were obtained. But the first outcome of churning was *Halaahal* or *Kaalkoota* (a deadly poison). Had Lord Shiva not drank it, the whole creation would have annihilated. So, some such aspect is inherently attached to the plan of ushering in the new era.



Make one of your goals for the New Year - Prioritizing on self-care. - Charmaine J Forde



This is an integral part of the divine scheme that the road to happiness opens after crossing the path of thorns.

This is why when Pujya Gurudev started the publication of Akhand Jyoti, he wrote the following lines in the editorial:

Sudhā bīja bone se pahle kālākūta pīnā hogā |

Pahana mauta kā mukuta viśvahita mānava ko jīnā hogā ||

Meaning: Without taking the pains and atoning for the accumulated sins, it is impossible to create the circumstances for the descent of a new golden era. Where is the possibility of creation without destruction?

It is true that the problems have increased, and the darkness has deepened, but it is a part of the well-planned scheme. If one takes pains early in life in refining and disciplining oneself, he can enjoy later. The essence of *Tapa-Sadhana* is taking pains and struggling for the right cause. Every traveler walking on this divine path has to bear such pains/troubles. Pujya Gurudev writes in his autobiography – ‘Before becoming God, Lord Krishna in the childhood itself had to deal with the poison of Putana and the attacks of Bakasur, Aghasur, Kaliya snake, etc.’

Every traveler on the path of greatness has to face grave dangers. We all know that King Harishchandra, before being honored as ‘*Satyavadi*’ (truthful), had to pass through several gruesome events. Likewise, Pandavas had to hide in the forest for 12 years before the coronation and bear the harsh nature.

Lord Rama also had to wander in the forests before establishing Ramarajya. The follower of the same path was Prahlad, who had to go through the fire. Prince Dhruv and Mira Bai had to pass through similar difficulties. These pains/problems are the inherent part of the process of self-refinement and the change of era.

The purpose of writing these lines here is to keep in mind that the path that Gayatri Parijans have adopted is the path of acid-test. This is the testing time of our eligibility. In such times, all of us should keep our will strong and try to nourish the tree of Gayatri Pariwar planted by Pujya Gurudev and Vandaniya Mataji. This will be the best tribute to our Gurusatta on Vasant Parva.

**With prayer-filled wishes
for a happy, healthy,
and harmonious New Year 2022,**

Pandey

(Pranav Pandya)



Life is a forge! Yes, and hammer and anvil, too! You'll be roasted, smelted, and pounded, and you'll hardly know what is happening to you. But stand boldly to it! Metal is worthless till it is shaped and tempered! More labor than luck. Face the pounding, don't fear the proving, and you'll stand well against any hammer and anvil.

- Lloyd Alexander



In order to be successful in the new year, stay focused, develop a positive attitude, and be passionate about your dreams. - Bamigboye Olurotimi



Extraordinary Results of a Solitary Resolve

Firm resolutions have a tremendous power that makes the accomplishment of even seemingly impossible tasks possible. The story of the beginning of Akhand Jyoti magazine that is now in our hands is also a tale of a superhuman resolve. It is worth narrating it again from today's perspective. When Pujya Gurudev published the first issue of Akhand Jyoti magazine in 1940, he wrote very clearly - "The next issue of Akhand Jyoti magazine will be printed by a fixed date next month and dispatched in the service of the readers. Without a registered number for the magazine, the postage charges are three times higher. So kindly wait for the magazine till the end of February. Akhand Jyoti will surely be dispatched by Feb 28th even at three times postage charges if the registration number is not received by then."

It is difficult to imagine that Pujya Gurudev, who somehow made arrangements for publication of Akhand Jyoti, selling all the jewelry of Mataji and whatever that belonged to him, was not ready to compromise on this assurance to the readers despite all the difficulties he faced.

He alone could have taken such a superhuman resolve in the adverse circumstances that prevailed then. It was a period of great turmoil in India and the whole world. But he still gave an assurance to deliver to each and every home of the subscribers a magazine that was being printed without any advertisements. With the strength of his resolve, he single-handedly arranged for correspondence, self-study, writing, formatting, publishing, arranging for paper for printing, registration number, and so on, at a time when British rule was at its peak of suppressing and torturing Indians and when even getting items for basic needs was quite tricky. But in these tumultuous circumstances also, he had so much confidence that he neither asked for any resources nor any financial help for publishing this magazine. Right from the beginning, except for a few articles in the initial issues, he wrote all the articles of the magazine himself.

Akhand Jyoti was first published on the Vasant Panchami of 1940, but his decision to start the magazine was taken a few years earlier. This is why he sent the first copy to 2000 people, explaining the background and the purpose behind the magazine. He also emotionally appealed that if the recipients liked the magazine, they should forward the same to 5 more people and subscribe to it at their convenience. Each issue cost nine paise and the yearly subscription Rs 1.50!

The magazine's primary purpose right from the beginning was to encourage the readers on the path of spirituality and spiritual practices. In the August issue of 1940, he expressed his sentiments in these words - "I am quite sure that readers



There is nothing magical about the flip of the calendar, but it represents a clean break, a new hope, and a blank canvas. - Jason Soroski



of Akhand Jyoti magazine must be following some kind of religious practices like prayers, bhajan, kirtan, chanting mantras, etc. Whatever you do out of your own religious beliefs, we urge you to find 15 minutes, either in a day or at night, to contemplate in solitude upon who you really are. You must ponder over the thought - are you truly fulfilling all the responsibilities assigned to you in this human birth? Ask your mind to tell you clearly, frankly, and truthfully what all your vices are.”

The first 13 prints of the magazine were published from Agra, and later Pujya Gurudev made Mathura, the birthplace of Shri Krishna, his place of residence. So all the arrangements for publishing the magazine had to be made again from Mathura. All the contacts for the publication had to be reestablished. But despite these adverse circumstances, he ensured that there wasn't even a day's delay in printing and dispatching the magazine.

Since the magazine was being published from Mathura, the front cover page of the first few issues of Akhand Jyoti carried the image of Lord Krishna standing in the war field.

The sentiment behind this choice was probably to make all readers of Akhand Jyoti understand that Lord Himself was protecting them in the then prevalent conditions of war. Tiding over all the challenges and difficulties, the readership of the magazine rose from 2000 to millions with the progress of time.

It was the result of the power of his resolve that starting from just a few houses, the magazine reached out to a vast number of homes. He knew from the beginning that this whole process would not be easy, and probably this is why he wrote in the early editions of the magazine - “Before the seeds of nectar are sown, deadly poison from the churning of seas need be drunk. Man has to wear the crown of death and live for the benefit of the whole world.”



The son of Maharishi Pulastya and the famous sage Vishwa's son was born very ugly, so he was named Kuber. All the family members were repulsed by his looks. When Kuber grew up, he could not endure his neglect, and he decided to increase his qualifications. Through intense penance, he became rich and started ruling in Alkapuri. Those who used to ridicule Kuber had to bow down before him.

The lesson of this mythological narrative is that innate qualities are more important than outer beauty. Therefore, one should continue to augment one's abilities by concerted efforts.



Remove 'shoulds' from your vocabulary this year. Start your journey of self-love now. - Kelly Martin



Pujya Gurudev lived the life of a valiant ascetic only to safekeep the whole world's future. This is why he wrote in those days of struggle - "Of clay is made this body-lamp, to burn is its heritage." He had started Akhand Jyoti as an invocation to divine consciousness. He had a single-minded objective - attempting to awaken the dormant divinity within humans and transform this earth into a heavenly land. And so, the first few lines of Akhand Jyoti claimed - "It is not the message of heavens that I bring, I have come to transform this whole world into heaven."

When the entire world was fighting against the extremities caused by the second world war, Pujya Gurudev had started writing and giving indications of the possible descent of the new

era in a time frame of about 100 years - by about 2042. He assured everyone that these catastrophic situations would get over soon. After 1947 he started writing elaborately on the essential ideas of spirituality so that the philosophy of Gayatri could reach everyone and that people could overcome their misgivings and lead purposeful lives.

As time progressed, Pujya Gurudev made Akhand Jyoti a medium to convey the essential concepts of scientific spirituality. He also published a series of articles titled 'Higher Level Spiritual Practices of Gayatri' for serious spiritual aspirants.

Thus, Akhand Jyoti is not just a beautiful outcome of the personal struggle of Pujya Gurudev; it also represents the divine flow that is helping create a background for the transformation of the era. The present times are posing several challenges and problems similar to the ones faced by Pujya Gurudev at the beginning of Akhand Jyoti. So, it becomes as relevant today as then that we become conduits to distribute this magazine, which is the pranic energy of Shantikunj, to as many people as we can.



Seeing the flickering Diya (earthen lamp), the 'darkness' burst into laughter and mocked - "See, your end has come. A small, petty lamp, you had the nerve to challenge mighty 'darkness'!" Diya replied- "Brother! In this world, the end of everyone is inevitable. If the light is not forever, so is the case with darkness; it too is not forever. The important point is for what purpose we all have lived our lives, and when we approach the end, what are our thoughts and feelings. I have the great satisfaction that I have lived for the benefit of others and also dying for them." This is the right purpose of life.



Allow not the shallow intentions or vile aspirations of others to taint your heart; love always.
With an abundance of positivity, you will counter the negative always. - Tiffany Luard



An Effective Method to deal with Unprovoked Opposition and Malice

It is a very common occurrence to have a difference of opinion with others when we live in a society. But if these feelings increase in magnitude, it could lead to conflict and bitterness in relationships. With the intricate combination of factors such as complex workings of the human mind, ego, and social interactions, it is highly undesirable that these hard feelings become a part of daily life and define the story of a family or a society. Therefore, we must have mutual cooperation, generosity, and tolerance to achieve collective progress.

Differences of opinion and confusion can occur even without any logical reason. Misunderstanding is the primary culprit in most cases, and this happens because people miss out on holding meaningful conversations. Under such circumstances, a tiny seed of doubt gathers strength and grows into a huge dispute over time. The easiest solution to this problem is to talk to one another to resolve such misconceptions instantly. Of course, this requires both parties to have a minimum amount of cooperation. If one of them remains adamant without having the courage or goodwill to accept their weakness, it becomes much harder to resolve a situation. But the solution undoubtedly is to talk to one another.

On the other hand, if the difference of opinion stems from jealousy or hatred or any other negative thought or emotion, the situation becomes more complex. The root cause for such issues is typically comparing or competing with one another. Being competitive is not a bad thing as long as it is healthy. It is good if one gets motivated by looking at someone's

progress. In fact, different cultures and societies worldwide have flourished and progressed based on such healthy competition and inspiration. There is a continuous exchange of ideas that helps to learn from one another, and this is the basis of the progress we see in society today.

Jealousy or misconception due to inherent frustration can cause a person to develop low self-esteem. So, instead of deriving inspiration from others, they rebuke others, find faults in them, and try to attain false satisfaction. As a result, anyone who is either progressive or successful is pulled down and humiliated with total disregard for their positive traits.

In such cases, there is barely a shred of truth. A minor issue is blown out of proportion to humiliate others. Especially, this situation becomes even more dangerous due to lack of interaction. What starts as slight jealousy soon takes the form of explosive anger and hatred. In such circumstances, the chances of resolving the situation through conversation are close to nil.



Cheers to a New Year and another chance for us to get it right. - Oprah Winfrey



If someone criticizes or humiliates you, slanders you, or slings mud, do not take it to heart and evaluate yourself based on those misguided opinions. Of course, it is only natural to be upset when faced with false and baseless allegations. Still, if you remain firm and unflinching of your truth and ready for the required self-improvement, then these allegations will manifest themselves as opportunities for self-refinement and nudge you to understand your own self and life at large.

On such occasions, if we respond to the allegations in the same language, then it implies that we have brought ourselves down to their level. Unfortunately, this means that we have also fallen knee-deep into the same dirt. However, no solution can be found in this manner. To make matters worse, this situation becomes a source of entertainment for bystanders.

In such situations, the smart thing to do is understand the underlying reason for the insults, criticism, and harsh words hurling at you. If there is an iota of truth in what is being told, take it as positive

feedback, and improve yourselves. A person should always assess oneself using the metrics of *Upasana*, *Sadhana*, and *Aradhana* and strengthen the roots of their existence.

In such instances, we will be untouched by the unwarranted anger and ill-will expressed by others, and we can continue to remain calm and tolerant. If the opposite person is even slightly clever, he will realize his own mistake and rectify his behavior and perspective. In case his negativity, insecurity, distrust, and ego are deep-seated, this transformation might take time. Nevertheless, we can never gain anything by locking horns with such a person. It is not a smart idea to stoop to their level and engage in the war of words. In either case, this is a losing battle.

Maharshi Patanjali says it is best to resort to indifference and silence while dealing with such people. We can then spare ourselves from sparring arguments and rebuttals, thus preserving our peace and calm. It might be best to let nature take its course and leave the person trapped by negativity to himself. Trusting the omniscient God allows us to focus on the right thinking and actions.

Do not entangle yourselves in the vicious cycle of unjustified anger and hatred directed at you. Instead, be steadfast in positive and righteous actions. Discharge your responsibilities, live a noble life, and build a strong account balance of *punya* and *tapa*. Invest a part of your time and resources for the well-being of society. Focusing your mind on the larger goal is the best method to ignore the unprovoked negativity from others.

You can't control what goes on outside, but you can always control what goes on inside.

– Wayne Dyer



Write in your heart that every day is the best day of the year. - Ralph Waldo Emerson



They had conveyed it in a very compact form — as verbal formulae or *mantras* (called *śrutis*). In those days (Vedic age), the disciples grasped the truth, the light of wisdom (conveyed by chanting the *śrutis*) through spiritual acumen and self-experience in the inner mind. They could do so, as their inner mind was awakened by *sādhana* — devout spiritual endeavors. There was no need for intellectual deliberations and analysis; as a result, there was no risk of getting into illusive arguments and wrong conclusions/inferences.

In the later ages of intellectual predominance with extrovert outlook and materialistic approach, some erudites began to superficially decipher the philosophical concepts and principles (encoded in the *śrutis*) in terms of linguistic analysis and prevailing scholarly trends. This led to many misinterpretations, misconceptions, and delusions in the explanations and translations of the ancient texts. A prominent example of this is the Vedanta-statement of ultimate truth in — “*Brahm Satyam, Jagat Mithyā*,” which means, *Brahm* alone is true, the entire world (everything else, every experience in this world) is *mithyā*³. This is true as a theoretical statement of the ultimate reality. However, it is often wrongly understood and explained.

The *rishis* knew that nothing is permanent in this ever-changing world. The absolute reality of things/experiences is not what we perceive via our senses (including the mind and intellect). Therefore, attachment with such things/entities or attempts to possess them always leads to sorrow, agony, failure, and repent, in one form or the other. Through the above statement/formula of Vedanta, the *rishis* (the seers of the Upanishads) aimed to warn us against such delusive attachments and guide us toward the source of eternal peace unalloyed joy. They did not state/mean to ask or (mis) guide anyone to reject the world’s existence as illusory and renounce or leave it.

The necessity of Worldly Resources, as Life is a Combination of *Jaḍa* and *Cetana*

The physical body (of every living being) consists of inert (*jaḍa*) substances. It is alive and capable of doing various activities only because of the Consciousness-Force (*cetana*) present in it. But it is also true that *cetana* cannot express itself without the body. Healthy growth and survival of the living body require several essential elements of matter (e.g., oxygen, water, and food in the case of the human body). Thus, the importance of materialistic resources and the physical and mental work in our life cannot be rejected outright. It does not sound logical either. If the world was not of any use, why did God take the pains of creating it?

Irrespective of whether one is a hermit, sage, saint, or a worldly (materialistic) person, whether one is young or old, whether one is a man or woman, everyone needs at least a minimum of the vital resources from this very world. Even the great ascetics/*sādhakas* engaged in arduous *sādhana*s in the caves on intractable heights of the Himalayas need certain vital elements from Nature in some form to keep the physical body alive. Thus, it is a universal fact that everybody living in this world requires some (minimum essential) worldly resources for the sustenance of his/her life.



The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide you’re not going to stay where you are. - J. P. Morgan



Then, why do the mystics say “*Brahm Satyam, Jagat Mithyā*”? By its very definition, “Truth” is — absolute, ever-existent, and invariant forever and at all the places/realms of existence. So, it is perfectly correct to say that *Brahm* is true. However, one cannot understand this universal fact or cannot even pay attention to it till/if one is running behind sensory pleasures or is driven by uncontrollable worldly passions. Sages warn us against the dreaded harms of worldly cravings and sensory passions, which gradually squeeze out our immunity, stamina, tolerance, and intellectual alertness. As explained earlier, the *rishis* describe the world as “*mithyā*” mainly to remind us that nothing is everlasting here; everything will “change” sometime or the other, it may give us some temporary ‘feeling’ of joy but will eventually cease to exist. Therefore, we should not get trapped in attachments or possessive feelings for anything or anybody. This will also help the liberation of our mind from all fears, worries, and tensions. Having controlled the negative traits, we should also maintain this control and accelerate our progress in the positive direction.

The *rishis* show us the righteous way to holistic progress. They teach — “*Sarva Khalvidam Brahm*” (Every entity, every form of existence is an expression of *Brahm*). That is, *paramātmā*⁴ is present everywhere in every element, every expression of *jaḍa* and *cetan*; all activities of the *jaḍa* and *cetan* become possible only through the will, inspiration, and action of *paramātmā*. Therefore, we should regard the world as a visible manifestation of *paramātmā* and make worthwhile use of the great opportunity we have got to live here. We should try our best to augment its grace, beauty, and glory by our good conduct, benevolence, and excellence of character and deeds. Living a duty-bound life with righteous progress and welfare activities is also a kind of worshipping God — the almighty creator (of the world). It is, in fact, an easier way of eventually realizing the light of *paramātmā*. Believing in the word meaning of ‘*jagat mithyā*’ is a grave

misinterpretation of the phrase. It would be quite misleading for most people. If one begins to regard the world as only an illusion, one might even consider his body as a non-existent entity! How would one live a normal life in that case? This would practically generate indifference and inertia. Renouncement of all *karmas* (including essential duties and other essential activities) as part of “*sanyāsa*” to attain self-realization and the ultimate light of *Brahm* is certainly a misconception that would lead nowhere. One should be aware that the existence and sustenance of life, the world, and the entire creation, rests only on *karma*. Nothing, and certainly not the supreme attainment, is possible without the necessary *karmas*.

No Escape from the Duties:

The seekers of *sanyāsa* for ultimate self-realization and salvation should also understand the correct meaning and purpose of the tradition of renouncing self-identity and all the activities and relations (which the aspirant has been engaged in). This means the renouncement of selfishness and the narrow domain of the present life (which so far has been revolving mainly around ego, self-interests, and wellbeing of the near and dear ones). This would be possible only by dedication to self-less *karmas* and



The magic in new beginnings is truly the most powerful of them all. - Josiah Martin



expansion of the domain of selfness to encompass the entire existence, all the beings, in it. Indeed, the real *sanyāsa* begins after merging the personal self into the impersonal.

Had renouncement of *karmas* were required for *sanyāsa*, Adi Shankaracharya, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and other great revered *sanyāsis* like them, would not have dedicated their lives to enlighten and elevate the masses; instead, they would have lived in some caves in a state of trance or meditative thinking and contemplation. Their lives stand as a testimony to the fact that real *sanyāsa* expands compassion and altruistic diligence beyond all bounds. What they did for the welfare of humankind in the short spans of their lives cannot be achieved by the resourceful long life of any ordinary (not free from attachments) person.

True *jīvana-muktas*⁵ are also like these immortal *sanyāsis*. Every moment of their life is dedicated to disseminating great values, knowledge, and other benevolent deeds. True *sādhakas* are also supposed to follow them. What to say about reaching the goal? In reality, one cannot move even one step ahead along the path of *sādhanā* (spiritual endeavor) if one regards the world as an illusion and escapes from

the essential worldly duties and social responsibilities. The Vedic texts of pure wisdom have emphasized the necessity of dutiful life and the importance of noble deeds (*satkarmas*). For example, the Ishavasya Upanishad states:

Kurvaneveha Karmāṇi Jijivīsecchataṁ Sabhāḥ |

Evam Twayi Nānyethetosti Na Karmalipyate Nare ||

Meaning: People should aspire to live a long life dedicated to noble *karmas*. This way (by doing more and more good deeds with a selfless attitude throughout life), one gets liberated from the *karma-bandhanas* (the thralldom of bearing the consequences of one's actions).

God Himself has to remain constantly busy executing and maintaining His limitless creation and regulating its order. Therefore, it would be preposterous to consider that humans can be excused from doing any *karma*. God's inexplicable beauty is reflected everywhere in (the manifested and sublime domains of) Nature. This world is also a part of His wonderful creation. The Almighty seems to have applied unique artwork in this lovely creation. Inner eyesight would show the presence and activity of God in every particle/element of the world as well. *Niṣkāma Karma Yoga*, in simple terms, is — to realize His sublime presence in the world we live in and unconditionally devote all our talents/potentials/actions in beautifying it worth His dignity. If one sincerely pursues this yoga with constant efforts of self-refinement, one may eventually find Him in this very world.

Every action performed without attachment to the results or expectation of specific returns is a *niṣkāma karma*. Such *karmas* do not bind or hinder (the divine light of) the soul. Thus, (*niṣkāma*) *karmas* can be a source of absolute enlightenment and *jīvana-mukti*. The world, being the medium/supporting domain for the transaction of *karmas*, is also crucial for ultimate realization (of the *Brahm*). Therefore, it cannot and should not be discarded as an illusion.



I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past. - Thomas Jefferson



Notes:

1. *Brahm*: Omnipresent, Eternal Consciousness-Force.
2. *Prakṛati*: Reflection of *Brahm* that serves as the basis of all manifested and non-manifested existence and experiences.
3. *Mithyā*: Illusory existence, or the ‘real-like’ experience we get in the dreams.
4. *Paramātmā*: The supreme soul/ God/the Omnipotent, Omniscient, active power of *Brahm*.
5. *Jīvana-muktas*: The accomplished *sādhakas* who have attained *Brahm-Gyāna* (ultimate realization, absolute wisdom) and salvation.



There is an anecdote from Mahabharata when Pandavas were in exile. Draupadi also accompanied them to the forest. During that time, Maharshi Durvasa visited them along with his ten thousand disciples. Duryodhana had played this dirty trick. He knew of Durvasa’s wrath and hence asked him to go as a guest. Pandavas had an Akshaya patra which Draupadi had obtained by worshipping the Sun God. A meal cooked in the Akshaya patra never got over irrespective of how many people ate. But once it was used and washed up, nothing could be done for the rest of the day. The following day when it was used to cook food, it would again become plenty. So, in this manner, it served the needs of one day. So, Duryodhana asked Sage Durvasa to go during the afternoon so that Pandavas would have had their meal and would not be hesitant to receive him. This was a cunning strategy devised by Duryodhana.

Sage Durvasa reached the abode of the Pandavas in the afternoon, as outlined by Duryodhana. This presented a serious problem. Durvasa said that he was famished and that food be served after he and his disciples returned from the river after taking a bath. Thousands of disciples accompanied him. Draupadi prayed to the Lord, and he appeared before her. Immediately he said that he too was hungry and asked what she could give. Draupadi was in a dilemma because she had invoked God to solve her problem with food. Lord Krishna said – ‘That is okay. Why don’t you just see in the vessel? Maybe a morsel or a grain is left out.’ She got the Akshaya patra and looked closely but did not find anything. So the Lord searched and found 2 grains of rice. The Lord ate it, and it is said that Durvasa’s hunger was satisfied with that. With 2 grains of rice, he satisfied the hunger of Sage Durvasa and his thousands of disciples. Sometimes the Lord comes to give infinite knowledge, but he asks for 2 grains before that. Similarly, Guru enters our life and asks for two things – attachment and ego.



Your present circumstances don’t determine where you can go. They merely determine where you start. - Nido Qubein



instant relief from symptoms of the disease has blinded our understanding. We have ignored the fact that repeated intake of these strong, intoxicating, and stimulating substances has terrible effects on the body in the long run. The disease goes away in a short time, but the toxins created in the body by these poisonous medicines keep creating several problems for a long time. People come with a hope to get treatment but go back with new issues and difficulties.

To provide a proper solution to this extreme challenge of health faced by humanity globally, Pujya Gurudev chose to revive the ayurvedic tradition of rishis in the pious environs of Shantikunj. Among various other divine experiments he conducted, the revival of this tradition was a prominent one. Bringing back into vogue, this potent and ancient system of medicine can be considered a great example of reviving the entire Indian culture. This has not only created a sense of pride among Indians towards their ancient knowledge, but it has also provided an alternate and much cheaper means of treatment of diseases for people who can ill afford the expensive cure offered by the modern system of medicine.

The Ayurvedic pharmacy established at Shantikunj manufactures more than 800 medicines today. Among these are amazing medicines like Pragma Peya and Sarasvati Panchak, for which people from India and abroad always queue up at the outlets. What is impressive is that when the prices of Ayurvedic medicines sold by most pharmacies have gone sky high, and their usage has become as expensive an affair as allopathic medicines, the same are produced and sold at Shantikunj pharmacy at minimum possible and very affordable prices even today.

The financial system at Shantikunj bears a significant burden on the production and sales of these medicines. Even then, the thought of Pujya Gurudev to make these available at

prices that can be afforded by even economically weaker sections of the society has been pursued solemnly. The basis of creating Shantikunj Pharmacy was not to do business but to revive the ancient tradition of rishis.

It has become challenging to source medicines from forests in a pure form. In earlier times, these medicines used to be brought and sold at small grocery stores, but now the process of sourcing these medicines has been taken over by big industrial houses. In order to make big profits, no care is taken to distinguish between real and fake raw materials, which is why people often do not benefit even after regular usage of herbal-based medicines.

The task of searching and bringing these medicines from the forests was undertaken by qualified ayurvedic experts earlier. Now this task is offloaded to laborers who do not even correctly know which part of which plant has the desired medicinal quality. As a result, medicines of even big and famous ayurvedic pharmacies fail to produce the desired effect.

The solution to this problem was also thought of by Pujya Gurudev many years back when he made the arrangement that Shantikunj Pharmacy would source all the raw material from



You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream. - C.S. Lewis



known Ayurvedic experts. In many cases, the material is brought from thousands of kilometers away. This is why there is no iota of reduction in the quality of these medicines even after so many years. Additionally, to make people aware of how these medicinal plants look, unique gardens have been prepared in Dev Sanskriti University and Brahmapur Research Institute, where many of these plants are being grown.

We have not stopped just with this. Regular workshops on Ayurvedic medicines are being organized to spread this knowledge in each and every corner of the country. As awareness increases about the amazing qualities of these medicines and people gain a correct understanding of their intake, each and every village will be able to take positive steps in this direction, and an effective system can be created to address the medical challenges faced by us. The outcomes of the system established by Pujya Gurudev at Shantikunj have been very encouraging. It can be now said with complete confidence that if this experiment gets replicated all over the country, a worthy path towards the well-being of humanity can be created. Undoubtedly, this would be an important step towards ensuring holistic health for everyone.



Sun and Metabolism

Anatomically, our brain comprises two layers – formed by a white element and gray matter. The white part constitutes the nerves and the ganglions. The nerves bundled in the ganglions are rich in phosphorous and are deeply immersed in the protoplasm. Phosphorous is constituted by the agni tatva (element of fire – energy) as reported in the Upanishads. The agni tatva present here (phosphorous and ATP in scientific terminology) is important for metabolism and energy maintenance for the body's functions. Deficiency of the agni tatva in the body results in indigestion, weakness, lack of stamina and body resistance, and the diminished glow of the eyes and the aura around the body. This agni tatva reaches us in abundance from the vital cores of the sun. Hence, the sunbath is the best resource for healing. Let us start using it. Wayne Fields has rightly written:

The best six doctors anywhere, and no one can deny it,

Are sunshine, water, rest, and air, exercise, and diet.

These six will gladly you attend if only you are willing,

Your mind they'll ease and charge you not a shilling.



Every single year, we're a different person. I don't think we're the same person all of our lives. - Steven Spielberg



Why Is Biodiversity So Important?

Biodiversity is the shortened form of ‘biological’ and ‘diversity.’ It refers to all the variety of life found on Earth (plants, animals, fungi, and micro-organisms), the communities they form, and the habitats in which they live. There are three types of biodiversity – genetic diversity, species or taxonomic diversity, and ecological diversity. The genetic variations found in different species are known as genetic diversity, and it is primarily a result of adapting to changing environments.

Species diversity is the number of different species that are represented in a given community. It is essential to have species diversity for an ecosystem to function properly. Ecosystem diversity deals with the variations in ecosystems within a geographical location and their overall impact on human existence and the environment. An example of ecological diversity on a global scale would be variations in ecosystems, such as deserts, forests, grasslands, wetlands, and oceans. Ecological diversity is the most significant scale of biodiversity, and within each ecosystem, there is a great deal of both species and genetic diversity. Biodiversity plays a vital role in human life, and its existence is not possible without it.

Depletion of ecosystems is making 27000 species extinct every year. The majority of them are tiny tropical organisms. If the decline of biodiversity continues at this rate, by 2050, one-fourth of the total number of species will become extinct. There are several advantages of biodiversity, namely – it fulfills the requirements of varied food production, fiber, timber, firewood, fuel, etc. Different crops like wheat, paddy, white millet (jowar), maize, sorghum, black millet or pearl millet (bajra), finger millet (ragi), pigeon peas (arhar dal), chickpeas

(chana dal), red lentils (masoor dal), etc. fulfill our dietary requirements, while crops like cotton and jute provide us with clothing.

Trees like Teak, Sal (*Shorea robusta*), Sheesham (*Dalbergia sissoo*), etc., and other variants fulfill our wood requirements for construction purposes. In addition, trees like Babul (*Acacia nilotika*), White Shirish (*Albizia procera*), Jamun (*Syzygium cumini*), Khejari (*Prosopis cineraria*), Haldu (*Haldina cordifolia*), and other species provide us with fuel. In contrast, trees like Shirish (*Albizia Lebbeck*), Drumstick (*Moringa Oleifera*), Shahtoot (*Mulberry/Morus Alba*), Babul (*Acacia Nilotika*), Karanj (*Millettia pinnata*), Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) are useful in preparing Ayurvedic medicines.

The use of biodiversity in agriculture can help make farm systems more resilient and productive by helping crop diversification strategies that develop crops resilient to pests and diseases. For example, the green revolution was brought about by a semi-dwarf variety of wheat known as Norin-10, initially grown in Japan. Similarly, a dwarf variety of



Your success and happiness lie in you. Resolve to keep happy, and your joy and you shall form an invincible host against difficulties. - Helen Keller



rice was developed based on Dee-geo-woo-gen (DGWG) from Taiwan.

In the initial years of the decade, starting from 1970, an outbreak of a pathogenic virus named Rice grassy stunt caused huge crop losses to the magnitude of 1,60,000 hectares in the Asian subcontinent alone. To develop resistance against this virus, a variant of the wild variety of rice grown in the central part of India named *Oryza Nivara* was used. World-famous IR36 rice was developed by crossbreeding of *Oryza Nivara*.

Botanical biodiversity also caters to the needs of medicinal herbs. It is estimated that 30% of the constituent medicinal herbs are obtained from tropical species. For example, *Catharanthus Roseus* is the source of drugs like Vincristine and Vinblastine used to treat blood cancer.

Rauwolfia Serpentina is a perennial shrub that releases the alkaloid used in medicines to treat high blood pressure. The gum from the plant *Commiphora wightii* is used for treating Rheumatism. Quinine, an alkali found in the bark of *Cinchona calisaya*, offers effective treatment for Malarial fevers. Wild yam (*Dioscorea deltoidei*) produces a chemical named diosgenin that is used as a contraceptive in women.

Biodiversity plays a pivotal role in counteracting environmental pollution. Some plants specialize in the disintegration and absorption of pollutants. Plants like *Sadabahar* (*Catharanthus Roseus*) can disintegrate explosive compounds like TNT (Trinitrotoluene). Various species of micro-organisms help in cleansing toxic materials. *Pseudomonas putida* and *Arthrobacter viscosus* are bacterial strains that can remove heavy metals found in industrial waste.

Some plant species can absorb and accumulate metals like copper, cadmium, mercury, and chromium mixed with clay. These plants can be utilized in the salvage of Indian metals. Water plants such as common water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), *Lemna minor*, *Salvinia*, and *Ejola* can dissolve heavy metals like cadmium, copper, mercury, and iron present in water.

Forests rich in biodiversity play a significant role in absorbing carbon dioxide present in the environment. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that is responsible for global warming. Tropical deforestation has led to a persistent increase in global temperature, which poses a significant risk of destabilizing the global climate. Biodiversity not only helps in soil formation but also in its conservation. Biodiversity improves the soil composition, enhances its ability to hold water, and increases its nutrients.

Biodiversity is helpful in water conservation, too, because it maintains the water cycle. Botanical biodiversity encourages water to seep into the ground slowly and steadily, which helps in retaining the groundwater levels, while biodiversity helps in maintaining the nutrition cycle by absorbing the nutrients and being the source of the same. The diverse micro-organisms present in soil disintegrate the dead plants and animals and release the nutrients back into the ground.



Take a leap of faith and begin this wondrous new year by believing. - Sarah Ban Breathnach



Biodiversity provides stability to the ecosystem and maintains the environmental balance. Plants and animals are connected through the food chain. The extinction of one species affects the existence of another one. This weakens the ecosystem. Plants serve as food for herbivore animals, while the meat of animals is a protein source for humans. Mangrove forests at the seashores are rich in biodiversity and protect against natural calamities like typhoons and tsunamis.

There are many social benefits with biodiversity because it is the best laboratory for understanding nature. Research, education, and expansion activities can progress only with the help of nature and the biodiversity present in it. There are innumerable facts to prove that human culture and environment have evolved hand in hand. So, the presence of biodiversity is crucial for cultural identity. Forest ecosystems resplendent with biodiversity are home to wild animals and tribals. Forests fulfill all the requirements of tribal folks. Massive deforestation has adversely affected tribal culture and forest life in general. In whichever perspective we look at, biodiversity is of utmost importance.



Nature's Gift

- Brahmi for Brain
 - Arjuna for Heart
 - Ashwagandha for Strength
 - Shatavari for Stamina
 - Guduchi (Giloy) for Immunity
 - Mulethi for Throat
 - Ginger for Digestion
 - Coconut for Metabolism
 - Sweet Potatoes for Pancreas
 - Pumpkin for the Gut
 - Carrots for Retina
 - Tulsi for Oxygen
 - Tomatoes for Prostate
 - Pomegranate for Red blood cells
 - Water for Blood
 - Grapes for Lungs
 - Papaya for Liver
 - Moringa for Muscles and joints
- Etc. Etc.

Let us respect Nature !!



Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end. - Seneca



The Power of Right Thinking Leads to Financial Success!

If you want to be financially successful, then profusely infuse your mind with the thoughts of prosperity. Do not think that you are living in poverty, impoverishment, and wretchedness. The worst thing in the world is the thought of being miserable. When paucity enters one's thoughts, he always cries for luck, even on being wealthy. The inauspicious thoughts of poverty prevent us from being prosperous and keep us stuck in the state of poverty. You were not born on earth to live in an inferior state of poverty, misery, or forlornness. You were not born to be a slave only for a handful of grain or clothes.

Why do the poor always remain in a state of impoverishment? The chief reason for this is that they destroy their higher aspirations, pious superior presumptions, healthy and enthusiastic thoughts, and submerge into lethargy and imprudence, making their heart constricted, petty, loveless, and desperate. When invaded with marginal poverty, life comes to a standstill, progress is obstructed, and the person becomes incapacitated beneath a load of debt. He even finds it difficult to upkeep his glory and self-respect. Those with poverty-stricken thoughts have been seen to grow old before time. Children born in low-income families develop such complex mental knots of poverty in their subconscious mind that they cannot achieve anything high or superior in life. Poverty causes lotus-like fresh faces to lose their luster and destroys even the supreme desires. This distressed mental state of poverty is enough to crush the personality. Millions of people are immersed in the pit of this frivolousness.

Financial success also requires a state of mind, caliber, and

striving attitude. Therefore, to invoke Goddess Lakshmi, one needs certain mental tendencies for worshipping her. On the occasion of Lakshmi Puja of Deepawali, we sweep, clean, paint, and decorate our homes. At the same time, we adorn ourselves with new clothes and ornaments. A similar process needs to be followed in the mental realm for worshipping her. More clearly, it means that one should use the broom of prudence to clean the webs of poverty, meanness, narrowness, and debt from every corner of the mind and paint the mind with the brightness of optimism.

Further, the blissful pictures of joy, hope, enthusiasm, happiness, humor, bliss, and cheerfulness should be affixed in the mental house. Then, one should pray to the Goddess of Wealth according to the rules of diligence and frugality. In this way, we will attain financial success. The greatest of all the skills is the one which teaches us to clean the mind of malefic and evil thoughts.

It is never the desire of our Supreme Father, the Almighty, that we remain the slaves of others from the financial



What a wonderful thought it is that some of the best days of our lives haven't even happened yet. - Anne Frank



aspect. He has given us wisdom, by using which we can understand the difference between proper and unreasonable spending, refrain from lust and intoxicants, cut down on our unreasonable expenses, extravagance and fashion, and stop various wasteful expenditures in our home. It is in our hands to increase our income. As much as we work hard and enhance our talents and gain excellence, recognition, and proficiency in our skills, our income will grow in the same proportion. There is no injustice in the world. Everybody acquires wealth according to his caliber and skills. Then why should we not augment our abilities and prove ourselves worthy in every way in this struggle?

While drawing attention to the essential elements of prosperity, Orison Swett Marden has written in his book, 'Peace, Power and Plenty' - 'We were made for happiness, to express joy and gladness, to be prosperous. The trouble with us is that we do not trust the law of infinite supply but close our natures so that abundance cannot flow to us. In other words, we do not obey the law of attraction. We keep our minds so pinched and our faith in ourselves so small, so narrow, that we strangle the inflow of supply. Abundance

follows the law as strict as that of mathematics. If we obey it, we get the flow; if we strangle it, we cut it off. The trouble is not in supply; there is abundance awaiting everyone on the globe.'

He writes further - 'Prosperity is a product of the creative mind. The mind that fears, doubts, depreciates its powers, is a negative, non-creative mind, one that repels prosperity, repels supply. It has nothing in common with abundance, hence cannot attract it.

Of course, men do not mean to drive opportunity, prosperity, or abundance away from them; but they hold a mental attitude filled with doubts and fears and lack of faith and self-confidence, which virtually does very thing without their knowing it.'

To really change the world, we have to help people change the way they see things. Global betterment is a mental process, not one that requires huge sums of money or a high level of authority. Change has to be psychological. So if you want to see real change, stay persistent in educating humanity on how similar we all are than different. Don't only strive to be the change you want to see in the world, but also help all those around you see the world through commonalities of the heart so that they would want to change with you. This is how humanity will evolve to become better. This is how you can change the world. The language of the heart is mankind's main common language.

- Suzy Kassem



The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old but on building the new. - Socrates



Development Initiatives for the New Generation

Teachers continually strive to mold children into good human beings. Besides imparting practical knowledge, they also encourage them to overcome difficulties. It is not necessary that these teachers be part of an educational institution. People that have the qualities of being a good teacher would always find, from their busy schedules and responsibilities, the time and opportunity to mold the lives of children. Listed below are the stories of some such inspiring personalities.

District Magistrate of Varanasi - Yogeshwar Ram Mishra, District Magistrate of Rudraprayag (Uttarakhand) - Mangesh Ghildiyal, Principal Secretary of Jharkhand and Deputy Commissioner of Commercial Taxes Department - K. K. Khandelwal are some of the IAS officers who have numerous administrative responsibilities, but the teacher in them has found a way to enlighten the lives of children. Ex-DGP of Bihar, Ajayanand, who runs the Super-30 coaching institute with Anand Kumar, has also dedicated all his time to children.

Police personnel on the Patliputra railway platform has become a teacher. This officer, who has been performing his official duties as well as bearing the responsibilities of a teacher, not only regularly goes to teach children but also evaluates their general knowledge and teaches them the right way of life.

Advocate Hari Om Jindal of Ludhiana handles civil and criminal cases, but the teacher in him is satisfied only after he finishes teaching the children of the factory workers and those living in the slums.

Fashion Designer Preeti Jaiswal of Lucknow is molding the lives of beggar children. Apart from her profession, she has the zeal to spread the light of education, and her initiative has led to an increase in children's knowledge and confidence.

The young District Magistrate of Rudraprayag (Uttarakhand) - Mangesh Ghildiyal, was worried about the progress of children of government schools. For this, he has been commuting on foot to remote schools and giving life lessons to the children there. His wife, Usha Ghildiyal, is with him in these missions and is teaching Science diligently to the girls of IX and Xth standard in the State Inter-College for Girls at Rudraprayag because there are no science teachers in that school. District Magistrate - Mangesh had picked up this task as soon as he took over the responsibilities there. When he noticed that the government educational system in the district was in shambles and there was no one to look after the young children, he was deeply hurt. So he went as a teacher amongst these children. So far, Mangesh has



You are never too old to reinvent yourself. - Steve Harvey



traveled on foot to more than five dozen such remote schools. For this, he sets off early morning to the villages, takes his breakfast on the way, and eats his lunch with the children. As a side benefit of doing this, he can also keep a check on the quality of food being served in these schools.

Born in an ordinary family, Mangesh informs that his father was a primary school teacher, and his mother was illiterate. He himself studied in government schools till 12th standard. Hence, he understands well the difficulties of people here. He gave strict instructions to the teachers against negligence towards the children's affairs.

Ex-DGP of Bihar, Abhyanand, had been teaching children while he was still serving as DGP and has continued to do so even after retirement. He laid the foundation of Super-30 with Anand Kumar in 2003 to help poor children in their preparations for IITJEE. After separating from Anand Kumar in 2007, he continued to mentor the children by associating with Rehmani Super-30 and Magadh Super-30, etc.

In 2014, after his retirement, he established Ajayanand Super-30 with the help of A. D.Singh. Now admission into his class itself guarantees admission into IITs. He says, 'Teaching gives him peace and satisfaction. Post-retirement, all my time is for the children, and the children, in turn, are giving him spectacular results.'

Similarly, Patliputra Railway SHO - Dileep Kumar Jha guarantees safe travel but is also dedicated to bringing the life of poor children on track. He teaches more than 150 children living in the slums near the Patliputra Railway Station. When he came to Patliputra station one and a half years back, he saw poor children collecting plastic bottles. That is when the idea of teaching these children came to his mind so that the children could live a better life. The

culture workshop at the platform began with 25 kids. Now the numbers have reached 200. Classes are held six days a week on platform number one. Earlier classes were held only once a day, but now classes are held twice a day due to increasing numbers. The retired individuals and youth living nearby are a great help in this endeavor. When the Collector enters the class, engages in a question-answer session, and shares his experiences, the children naturally get excited, listen intently and absorb everything that is being told to them. This is precisely what has happened in Varanasi. The District Magistrate himself is engaged in quality education at the higher secondary school in the Ardali market. For two hours every Saturday, the District Magistrate takes up the role of a teacher in this school.

The school principal Babulal Yadav says that since the Collector has adopted the school, students have gone up from 53 to 92. The school now has the main gate. The Collector arranges water cooler, boundary wall, tables and chain, sports equipment, etc. Children also admit that a lot has improved since the Collector has started coming to the school. Interestingly on the day, the District Magistrate comes to the school, every student is present. Even before he came to Banaras, when he



Just when the caterpillar thought her life was over, she became a butterfly. - Unknown



was District Magistrate of Barabanki, during inspections, he would go to the classes and converse with the students. Where most people would distance themselves from the begging children, fashion designer Preeti Jaiswal is such a woman who not only understood the pain of these children but also took up the responsibility of teaching them. A fashion designer by profession, Preeti Jaiswal has inherited the zeal to do social service. She says – ‘Her father, before becoming a contractor, was a teacher and was ever eager to teach poor children. He would gather them and teach them for free.’ That is where she picked the zeal to teach poor children.

Preeti, who has done a fashion designing course from NIFT Nepal, settled in Lucknow after marriage. While traveling from Allahabad to Lucknow, when she saw the state of hungry, poor children, she found it heart-wrenching. That is when she decided that she would enlighten their lives with education so that they could become independent and never have to beg in front of others.

K. K. Khandelwal, a senior IAS officer, is currently serving as Principal Secretary and Deputy Commissioner of the Commercial Taxes Department. This year six students taught by him have cleared the IIT entrance examination. Khandelwal himself has studied at IIT Kharagpur. He wanted to be a scientist but became an IAS officer after completing his education at IIT. When he worked hard to study the new syllabus and helped his son Ankur Khandelwal to study for IIT, his son got an all-India rank of 57. After this, when he taught his younger son Anupam Khandelwal and nephew Aniket, they achieved a rank of 9 and 56, respectively. When he saw this, he felt that he should teach children. So in 2015, he started teaching six children. When the results came out in June, all of them succeeded. Khandelwal says, “Children’s success gives immense pleasure. A teacher is made famous by his students. If the children taught by you succeed, your pleasure and happiness would have no bounds. I like teaching children. Without that happiness, doing this task would not be possible.”

A resident of Kichlu, Ludhiana Advocate Hari Om Jindal, has established a school in the slums only to educate the kids living in those slums. Today he teaches about 100 students. The handful of examples cited here and several other grass-root level initiatives/contributions of our youths toward social upliftment through education, nature-friendly development, and self-reliant economic progress through successful start-up companies, etc., offer promises of a bright future for our country and its global collaborators.

We can’t be afraid of change. You may feel very secure in the pond that you are in, but if you never venture out of it, you will never know that there is such a thing as an ocean, a sea.

– C. JoyBell C.



We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise, we harden. - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



How to Control Anger?

Rishi Valmiki writes in the epic Ramayana that anger is the enemy of life and the road to destruction. Anger is a terrible poison. Not everything in life goes according to our wishes, and unwanted business loss, humiliation, or slightest rejection makes us angry.

In anger, we lose our integrity and commit a terrible crime. A person can commit murder, suicide, and even bloodshed in a fit of excitement. Anger for a moment becomes a curse for a lifetime. There is no mercy in anger; there is no compassion. Anger does not create but destroys. Anger is an imbalance; anger is a cruel thought; anger is madness; anger is the door to hell.

In the Gita, the cause of anger is said to be the non-fulfillment of desires. When a person desires that everything should work according to his wishes, and there is an obstacle in fulfilling it, it gives rise to anger. Everyone likes a smiling face; it impresses all. No matter how rich, scholarly, and higher a person's position, if his behavior is not sweet and humble, he is not considered civilized. If he gets furious in trivial matters, gets irritated, and due to arrogance, reprimands, and tortures his subordinates on minor issues, then people are not happy with him, and he becomes an object of condemnation. His business is affected, and people wish him bad luck.

Anger leads to a loss in every sphere of life. Ayurveda considers anger to be the father of many diseases. In a state of anger, a person's rationality is reduced. At that time, bile becomes more profuse, the mouth and eyes become red, lips start trembling, fists close, the throat becomes dry, and blood pressure rises.

When the passion of anger rises, a person reaches a semi-neurotic state. His decision-making ability and his behavior become bizarre. If you look carefully at the person's movements in whom the impulse of anger is rising, you will know that he is very close to the state of madness. Due to excessive anger, the brain starts heating, and if it is not calmed, then a situation of committing cruel acts arises.

The face becomes distorted in anger. Angry expressions are visible on eyes, nose, etc. Indecent and inappropriate words are uttered from the mouth. The body starts burning due to the rapid flow of blood. Hands and legs start shaking, and the skin's hair stand on end. The toxicity caused by anger is the most dangerous for the digestive system. It gives rise to toxicity in the blood and produces yellowness in the body, produces sciatica, and tension in the nerves. According to Ayurveda, a baby drinking milk from a mother who is in a state of anger causes stomach aches, and drinking the milk of a mother who is always angry, then that child gets chronic stomach disease.



No matter how hard the past, you can always begin again. - Buddha



Renowned Doctor J. Ester says that 15 minutes of anger destroys a person's energy equal to 9 hours of labor. A moment's anger burns 1600 RBCs, whereas only 1400 RBCs are produced in a peaceful calm emotional state. There is no sin like anger, and there is no enemy like anger. Anger is the root of all misfortune. That is why anger is forbidden. In the Mahabharata, it has been said that the sage who gets angry is a diabolical creature and a despicable person. An angry person becomes devoid of conscience to discriminate right from wrong actions. A western scholar has also said that anger extinguishes the lamp of the mind.

Though anger is normal, usually healthy, human emotion, it can lead to problems when it gets out of control and turns destructive. Therefore, there is a need to learn techniques to calm oneself when the situation leads to anger. In the following lines, we summarize the advice of Pujya Gurudev regarding how to deal with such emotions.

When you get disturbed by some event or person, take a few moments to think before you speak. This will also allow others involved in the situation to do the same. Once your thoughts are clear, express your frustration in an assertive but non-aggressive way. You should state your concerns and needs clearly and directly, without hurting others.

Take a few deep breaths; if possible, do pranayama. This can help reduce the stress that may upset you. Physical activity (like brisk walking or running) may also help rejuvenate your mind-body system. In a calm state, identify the possible solution to the problem. Instead of criticizing or blaming others for the situation, start searching the soul. Learn to be respectful to others.

Darkness cannot expel darkness; only light can do it. So, learn to remain positive and forgive yourself and others involved in the situation that made you angry. This act will appease both sides as well as strengthen the relationship.

Finally, restructure yourself cognitively, that is, change the way you think. For example, your thinking may get very aggressive when you are angry. Try replacing irrational and dramatic thoughts with more rational ones. Practice this every day, even if there is no frustrating situation. This technique will train your mind to remain positive all the time.

Shouting at someone is not the way to help. If you've already shouted, then realize that this is one of your unskillful behaviors. Go back to your in-breath and out-breath and say, I have to repair this. Then go to the other person and apologize, and tell yourself that next time you'll try your best to remember beforehand and act differently.



It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are. - E.E. Cummings



We are Not Alone in This Universe!

No matter how mysterious the beliefs and presumptions about the existence of alien planets may be, this fact has to be accepted that there are many worlds beyond the visible one, where people are just like human beings. They have their own civilizations and cultures and lead their lives in their way. This fact gets reaffirmed by the events that come to light from time to time.

An incident in England dates back to the reign of King Henry II. One day a brother and sister with green-colored skin came out of a hole at a place, 'Marie de Ulpituss.' Their hands and feet were certainly like that of human beings, but the color of their skin was deep green. They were wearing strange attire, made out of some unknown cloth, which could not be identified. When they came out of the hole, they wandered here and there in the fields in astonishment for a long time. Eventually, the farmers caught them and brought them to Richard D. Kelly, a local elite. In several months their skin tone changed to that of normal human beings. In the meantime, the brother died of some disease. In contrast, the sister survived and continued to lead a married life just like any other citizen.

When the girl was asked how they reached the Earth, she said they reached a cave one day while grazing sheep. They heard a melodious sound coming from within. They entered it and wandered inside for a long time to find the source of the music and eventually landed up in this world. She further stated that they kept roaming here and there for some time upon coming on this planet. Finally, they wanted to return to their own world. They searched for the cave-door, but could

not succeed and were caught by the village folk.

When asked whether her world is also like ours, she revealed that her world is not as hot as the Earth, nor is there so much light. Neither is there any sun to illuminate the planet. Yet, there is no darkness. On the contrary, a dim and cool glow like moonlight exists. She used to describe herself as the inhabitant of the kingdom of Saint Martin, but she did not know on which side was it located. She often used to say that there is another world as bright as the Earth near her world, but there is a huge impassable river between the two. This incident has been elaborately mentioned by Saint William of Neuberg, the then famous saint of England, in his work 'Historia Rerum Anglicarum.'

While explaining the cause and mechanism of such events, scientists expound that this happens due to a hole in the wall between two worlds. Unfortunately, if a person reaches that tunnel entrance, he will be pulled within. From there, he would reach another world, from where



Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does. - William James



the probability of his return will be negligible. Still, even if it is possible somehow, then the condition of that person will be similar to one suffering from amnesia, meaning he must have forgotten everything before, during, and after the incident.

Discussing the second possibility, the scientists say that another way for the unfortunate to come out maybe by having paranormal powers. With such capabilities, he would be able to strike the wall between the two worlds through his psychic abilities, which would enable the door to open in the same way as the key opens the lock in a single stroke. If any such eminent being, unintentionally or due to negligence, ever gets caught in this whirlpool of time, he will come out safely from it in the same way as a diver does from the sea. But, for accomplishing this, it would be essential to find the door through which he reached the other world. If he fails in this, he will not be able to come out of it by any means.

Currently, scientists explain such phenomena on the basis of black holes. In their opinion, only the theory of black holes can be justified and valid in such contexts. Its scientific explanation is not possible in less than this. So far, two such black holes have been found

on our Earth. One of these is the Bermuda Triangle located between Florida, Costa Rica, and Bermuda, while the other one was discovered in the 1990s. This triangle between Japan, Taiwan, and Guguan is known as the 'Dragon's Triangle.'

In the anecdote above, the supernatural girl mentioned landing on the Earth after walking a long distance into a long tunnel. The experts of science also make a similar prediction about the fate of a person trapped in a black hole. Eminent physicist and mathematician Prof. John Taylor writes in his work 'Blackhole - the End of the Universe' that the tension inside the black hole is so intense that space within it assumes the form of a long thin neck, the other end of which may be connected to another world. He illustrates that if this happens and the person remains safe inside the black hole, he will reach a completely different world through this narrow stretch. Even if he remains alive, he will fail to establish any contact with his world, even with the most sophisticated devices. In such a situation, he can again put his spaceship in the black hole in the hope of returning to his world, but every such effort will prove to be futile and take him to an entirely new world every time. In this way, he may probably never successfully reach his original world.

The above discussion was about the black holes of the universe. While, regarding the black holes located on Earth, some scientists believe that many such small black holes may be present on its surface, but for some reason, their openings remain closed and rarely open, but when they are open, similar incidents as described above are seen and heard. Why do they only open occasionally? In order to get information in this regard, scientists are now trying to create small black holes in their laboratories, so that in-depth study and research can be carried out about their attributes. If this happens, then the inter-planetary movement would be



We are the authors of our destinies. - Nike Campbell-Fatoki



possible without any difficulty, and people would be able to travel to different planets at any time as per their convenience.

Such travels were carried out during ancient times, which is mentioned in our scriptures. It seems impossible and unbelievable nowadays because spiritual metaphysics have been reduced to hypocrisy, and spiritual knowledge is considered jugglery of roadsides. People are neither ready to accomplish ardent austerities nor eager to bring spiritual discipline into their lives. They want to acquire everything in no time. How can such eminent knowledge be attained so easily? So, they adopt deceptive means and begin to cheat innocent people. Those who are tricked lose their faith in religion and spirituality. They begin to consider the miracles of occult knowledge to be nothing but deceit. The distrust prevalent these days is a consequence of this fraud. This does not mean that everything mentioned in the scriptures is just fiction. In fact, it is not possible to assess the depth of the soul by intellectual estimates, which today has become the basis of its estimation. This is also one of the reasons

for not developing belief in occult sciences.

But this cannot change the truth and facts. Interplanetary travel is such a reality, which has been carried on in the past as well, and the deserving beings can make it happen even today, and there will be scope for it even in the future. In the *Van Parva* of Mahabharata, there is an account of Sage Kahoda undertaking one such tour, in which he went to Varuna Loka through sea route and performed a Yagya there and then returned safely. This should not be considered as a myth but a well-developed science. This also validates the fact that the existence of different worlds is not a mere classical concept but is a reality. The sooner we can accept it, the better it will be.

Nature ... has made it impossible for us to have any communication from this earth with the other great bodies of the universe, in our present state, and it is highly possible that he has likewise cut off all communication betwixt the other planets, and betwixt the different systems.... We observe, in all of them, enough to raise our curiosity, but not to satisfy it ... It does not appear to be suitable to the wisdom that shines throughout all nature, to suppose that we should see so far, and have our curiosity so much raised ... only to be disappointed at the end ... This, therefore, naturally leads us to consider our present state as only the dawn or beginning of our existence, and as a state of preparation or probation for farther advancement.

- Colin Maclaurin



Be the change you wish to see in the world. – Mahatma Gandhi



Invocation

and Enshrinement - 3

Views on the *Varna* System

Acharyashri responded to Goenkaji's comments with a query — "What if someone belonging to the other *varnas* (than Brahmins) also seeks enlightenment? From where will he/she get the higher knowledge?" Goenkaji argued, "They could read the Holy Scriptures like the Ramayana, Mahabharat, and Puranas. Vedas have emerged from God Brahma's voice. It requires a certain level of purity and illumination of mind and the power of *sadhana* to grasp it. Therefore only *dwijas* (who have done substantial *sadhana* of Gayatri after thread-ceremony) would have the ability to attempt reaching the super realms of knowledge. Original Vedic knowledge is scripted in the form of abstract hymns. After years of *sadhana* and research under a noble Guru, only sagacious minds would be able to decode such abstract knowledge. The scriptures like Puranas, Mahabharat, and Ramayana preach the essence of knowledge necessary for illumination of ordinary minds in a narrative style via allegoric literature and stories."

When he completed explaining his

point, Acharyashri said - "You may be right in your viewpoint. I consider that no one should be prevented from gaining the ability to attain pure knowledge. I think if the study of Veda-Shastras (Vedic texts) is not propagated and the ancient texts are not made easily available to the seekers, eventually, this treasure of divine knowledge may be practically lost. I agree that powerful *sadhana* and long-term study under adept guidance would be required for correct decoding and proper interpretation of the abstract hymns of the Vedas. But every seeker should be given a chance to attain that ability without any constraint of *varnas*. In any case, there should be a problem with the Upanishads. Their teachings can be grasped without ambiguity or chance of misinterpretation. Moreover, there is no constraint on who can possess and read the Upanishad texts, etc. What is your opinion about widening their availability?"

"I would not be able to take any decision in this regard. I follow whatever the swamis and hermits associated with the Gita Press guide" – Goenkaji responded.

They exchanged views on several socio-religious notions in the context of what the Shastras (ancient Indian texts) convey. The topics included the issues of untouchability too. Goenkaji's convictions appeared influenced by fundamentalists' interpretations: "Driven by modernity, some people are going to break Shastric traditions. They are fighting to open the doors of temples (sacred shrines) for everyone. How can those prevented by the Shastras from entering a temple be allowed to worship there? Such



The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. - Eleanor Roosevelt



practices in the name of freedom and rationality will destroy the *varna* system” – he said.

“I have had the opportunity of reading the original Shastric texts. I could not find any mention in the Shastras that people belonging to certain *varna* or social strata cannot go to the temple or pray and offer devotional worship there” – Acharyashri made him aware of the facts. Then Goenkaji referred to some religious masters and hermits who have been supporting the restraints in the name of Shastras.

Now Acharyashri explained to him in greater detail - The “*Shrutis*” (Veda and Upanishads) are the original Shastras reflecting realizations of eternal wisdom. The knowledge inscribed in these is perennial and holds the key to divine bliss, absolute enlightenment, and ultimate evolution. What you are referring to is an interpretation of the teachings of some “*Smritis*,” which are like doctrines suitable for a particular kind of people over a specific period. They need not be relevant beyond a specific phase of cultural civilization. For example, the teachings of “*Manu-Smriti*” might have been suitable in some period of ancient history, but it is neither justified nor relevant today. The notion of social hierarchy and discrimination you are talking about had emerged and spread in medieval times of religious misconceptions and socio-cultural devolution. Several types and versions of the *Smritis* have been written by the sages and religious leaders of different times. It’s time that the saints and religious scholars of today rewrite the “*Smritis*” and “*Puranas*” in a new light to propagate the values and disciplines that are essential for the upliftment and welfare of the human society today.”

His crisp explanation was so logical and authentic! Shri Jay Dayal Goenka had now been convinced that Acharyashri’s views were concurrent with the original teachings of the

Shastras. But he was hesitant in advising the swamis and hermits who were like his spiritual guides till now. His upbringing as a trader’s (businessman’s) son was such that he had never felt the need to read any sacred text himself.

Although it was hard for him to change the convictions assimilated since childhood, he could not deny the eventuality that with the expansion of transport and communication facilities, people from different walks of the society, from different parts of the nation will come closer and mix so well that it will be difficult to judge who belongs to which strata of society or which caste; thus the roots of caste-system will gradually loose grounds on its own.

He thanked Acharyashri and asked him to send a message whenever and whatever help was required towards the inaugural function and after that for the activities of the *sadhana* center at Tapobhumi. Shriram told him that we are all working for the service of humanity and the resurrection of religion, so there is no need for any other support. Your goodwill and friendship will be strong support.

Goenkaji picked up his turban that he had kept down while paying respect



Making New Year resolutions is one thing. Remaining resolute and seeing them through is quite another. - Alex Morritt



to the saint-sage (Acharyashri) in the morning. He wore it on the head said *pranam* to Acharyashri before leaving. Acharyashri wanted to see him off till the gate, but the visitor stopped him, saying that there is no need for any formality; in fact, under such strict fasting, he should walk as little as possible.

Angelic Envoy from the Himalayas
The date of the *purnahuti* (completion of *yagya*) of *Sahasranshu Brahm Yagya* and *Pran-Pratishtha* (ceremony of consecration of idol) of Gayatri was coming closer. Nearly three thousand persons were expected to participate in this day-long sacrament. Many more *sadhakas* wanted to come from outside, but there were instructions that only one or two representatives from each place should go here, and the remaining *volunteers* should continue with their Gayatri *Upasana* and its propagation in their localities/towns.

The groups of volunteers who had gone to collect the holy water and soil of different *tirthas* had also started returning. All these and other volunteers had reached the Tapobhumi premises by the evening of June 19. Several of the invited saints had also arrived. Swami Omkaranand and Swami Premanand, a Sannyasi of Arya Samaj, had arrived two days ago. The

concerned committees of local *parijans* were busy making arrangements of their lodging and boarding and giving necessary information and instructions regarding the main program that was to begin the next day.

Acharyashri could not move around easily, as he had become weak physically after the prolonged *Jala Upawasa*. His body weight in this period had reduced by 8 kg. His body temperature had also risen that day. But his inner strength and energy had enhanced tremendously. His eyes were shining like a diamond. He often used to keep them closed. As such, he used to speak less, and except for essential instructions and discussion with savants, he had remained silent most of the time during this *upawasa*. Because of this and the weakness of his physical body that was sustained only on air and water for the past 24 days, he was finding difficulty speaking loudly. The people who were assigned the duties of conducting the sacraments and other programs for the grand event were hesitant to ask him whether he would be giving a speech during the main function tomorrow. Some members went to seek his advice before finalizing the detailed program schedule. He told them that he might not speak himself. Instead, he would give his message in writing that could be read by one of them on his behalf.

Although his body had gone weak, and he had a fever, Acharyashri's eyes had become so sparkling that people could see the light emitted from these from a long distance. He, therefore, kept the eyes half-closed, as ordinary people standing in front would not have been able to bear the powerful radiance.

As planned, the *Gayatri Yagya* began in the morning on June 20, 1953. Five fire-altars (*Yagya-Kunds*) were made in the open ground (where the *Yagyashala* of Tapobhumi stands today) in front of the temple. The *yagya* was to continue for



We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity, and its first chapter is New Year's Day. - Edith Lovejoy Pierce



three days. Pandit Lalkrishna Pandya was the head priest to conduct the proceedings of *yagya*-rituals. In addition to the *yagya*, chanting of *Gayatri Sahasranam*, *Purush Sukta*, *Mahamrityunjaya mantra*, and *Durga Saptashti*, 125000 times recitations of the *Gayatri Chalisa* were also being carried out by some groups of *sadhakas* in the Tapobhumi premises at different times of the day.

Two types of special fire-flames were to kindle the *yagya*-fire: one was produced through *arani-manthan*, and the other was brought from “Triyugi Narayan” — the pilgrimage site on the heights of the Himalayas regarded as the *tapasthali* of Lord Shiva and Parvati. This Himalayan *agni* (fire), brought by a *siddha-yogi*, was lighted there for nearly eight hundred years. Its arrival in the *yagyashala* of Gayatri Tapobhumi that day was also miraculous.

Acharyashri took out some *samidhas* (dry, thin wood pieces) of *Shami* (scientific name *Prosopis cineraria*) and *Palash* (*Butea monosperma*) for the process of *arani-manthan*. No one knew since when he had kept these in the Akhand Jyoti Sansthan! Mataji had brought these wood pieces at Tapobhumi on this *yagya* day. The *sadhaka* couples sitting around the *yagya kundas* were asked to put a cotton *batti* (wick) soaked in ghee in the middle of the *samidhas* arranged inside the *kundas*. Everyone was instructed not to use any matchbox or lighter to light the fire. Acharyashri told them that this is a special *yagya* for a specific spiritual purpose, so the fire will be ignited only by the spiritual experiment of using sublime energy-currents from the transcendental domains of Nature.

People present there were eager to watch this unique phenomenon. They were also curious about the other type of special *agni* that was brought from the Himalayas. Who had got it? Where was it kept? Some dedicated

sadhakas recalled that last evening one enlightened Sadhu was seen standing near Acharyashri. He was wearing an old but spotless clean *cheever*. Nobody had seen him entering the Tapobhumi premises. His personality had a divine charm. The *parijans* who were fortunate to witness this astounding event saw some illumined aura around his body.

According to Shri Kedarnath Singh, who had come from Patna, Shri Janaki Sharan Das from Ayodhya, Shri Chandrakant from Jaipur, Shri Ramakant Joshi from Poona, and a few others who were present there, the Sadhu was holding a *kamandal* that was slightly bigger than they had seen earlier. They saw something glowing like embers inside the *kamandal*. Acharyashri got up from his bed and stood straight immediately after seeing the Sadhu. It was a pleasant surprise for them to see this sudden spark of energy in Acharyashri, whose body had become so weak because of *Jala Upawasa* of 24 days and fever that he was hardly able to sit a few minutes ago! Acharyashree paid respect to the Sadhu. Then, pointing at the *kamandal*, the latter told him that this pious *agni* from the Himalayas should also be enshrined in the *yagya-kundas*, which will be kindled by *arani manthan*. This is a



And now we welcome the new year. Full of things that have never been. - Rainer Maria Rilke



siddha agni; it should remain lighted forever. He then took out the fire and kept it in a copper pot there. The *sadhaks* standing around were feeling beatified watching this.

The Sadhu went out and disappeared after a few moments. Later on, Acharyashri informed the curious *parijans* that he had come from the unreachable cores of the Himalayas, where many *siddhas* have been engaged in *tapa-sadhana* for hundreds of years. Acharyashri did not say anything more about the fire at that time. Several years later, while narrating his supernatural experiences in the Himalayas, Acharyashri disclosed that his angelic Guru had taken him to these mysterious *siddha-lokas* in the Himalayas where he got the opportunity to see the *rishis* of ancient times doing *yagya*. His Guru informed him that these *siddhas* remain in the subtle body forever and can also appear in the physical body at will (as Acharyashri could see them). They continue doing *tapa-sadhana* to balance Nature's creative powers and protection of the world and alleviate the sufferings of living beings.

[To be continued]



Sage Bharadwaj spent his entire life in penance. In the last moments of his life, when the angels came to pick him up, he first expressed his gratitude to the messengers and humbly requested, "If God is happy with me, please give me a chance to be born again in the world instead of taking me to heaven. What will I do in heaven?"

The angels were very surprised by the sage's wish. Out of curiosity to know the rationale behind this harsh decision, the angels asked him, "Oh Great Rishi, you have attained the goal of all austerities to go to heaven, then why did you take up austerities?" Bharadwaj smiled and clarified his intention, "For the accumulation of knowledge. I do not have a wealth of knowledge yet to reach the Absolute Truth, and for that, I am aspiring to do penance for many more births."

Further clarifying his point, the sage said, "Oh God's angels, you know that knowledge is higher than heaven. The facilities of heavenly luxury can be obtained, but the only provider of eternal bliss is knowledge." The angels were greatly impressed by the knowledge of Bharadwaj and gave him his desired wish. It is said very aptly that the whole world's glory, even the happiness of heaven, is insignificant in front of true knowledge.



Don't make plans. Make options. - Jennifer Aniston



Three Principles of My Life

This article is a translated version of the one that appeared in the June 1952 issue of Hindi Akhand Jyoti. It was written by Acharya Vinoba Bhave.

I have set three ethical standards in my life. The first is endeavor (physical and mental efforts) to accomplish my goal in life. A number of people in our country are habitually lazy. This is due to unemployment. Those who are illiterate are naturally far away from pursuing anything, and without an act of seeking, there cannot be any delectation in life. In my opinion, any nation where people do not engage in any activity whatsoever to gain their livelihood is vulnerable to inevitable harm. Living a life without any means of livelihood is of no use.

There must be a work culture in every home. Otherwise, the indolence of family members, especially male members, will bring the family into a state of partial ruin. The world is already full of sorrow. Finding joy in the world is a delusion. Saint Ramdas said – ‘One stupid who sees pleasure in this world is super stupid.’ Many people come to me with different stories of deep mental anguish and suffering every day. After great thought and undergoing experiences of their agony, I am also convinced to perceive the world in the same way. To make this world a pleasing place to live in, there are no other means except to engage in some activity, and the most feasible activity that everyone can execute is hand weaving. Cloth is the need of everyone. Every child, woman, or man can prepare their cloth by weaving. If we honor this culture, the spinning wheel shall become our friend. Attempting to work with it in a depressive state of mind will restore

mental peace because the mind gets engaged in some pursuit, and as a result, grief is dissipated. In one of his poetries, Gaiety narrated the character of a very grief-stricken lady. At last, she took shelter of a spinning wheel to shed her sorrow. The poet has tried to convince that the spinning wheel allayed her grief, and this theory also convinces me.

Weaving is a very useful means specifically for women. Any person should never remain idle. Laziness is our biggest enemy. I don't criticize going to sleep when needed, but one should not be conducive to idleness when he is awake. This inactivity has impoverished us and subjugated us to bigger powers. We, therefore, must incline towards pursuing something.

The second thing which has influenced me is the path of devotion. Any spiritual discipline which has most influenced me since my childhood is the path of devotion. My mother imparted this knowledge to



It is your right to choose what you do and don't do, to choose what you believe in and don't believe in. It is your right to curate your life and your own perspective. - Lady Gaga



me. Afterward, prayer at both times in Ashram became my practice, and later on, it developed into a habit. But devotion is not hypocrisy. We should not resort to fake devotion by avoiding pursuit to work. We must resort to prayer every morning or evening after a busy day's schedule. Resorting to prayer after committing immoral practice and evil conduct all day does not yield any fortune. Rather, one should indulge in virtuous acts and service all day and offer the merits of that service to Almighty in the evening. God forgives our all vices which are done unintentionally.

We must feel remorse for what we have failed to do, and God forgives such conduct. All boys and girls should gather every day for at least 15 minutes to offer prayer. Any day without resorting to prayer should be considered as spent thoughtlessly. This is my opinion. I am fortunate to find like-minded people near me. My brother has informed me in a letter that he is studying these days the literature of saint Ramchandra. He is too concerned about him to think anything else, even about his decaying health, as he is sick these days. So is my brother. My friends and master are of the same attitude. My mother also was of the same nature. Saint Gyandev has written that God

says, 'If I am not found in the heart of ailing persons, not on Sun or elsewhere, I will definitely be found where my eulogizing is going on. But my eulogizing must be done only after pursuing some virtuous activity to gain a livelihood; otherwise, this will be presumed as something false and purported to be genuine.'

The third standard that I resolutely follow but very difficult for others to perform is learning a lot and teaching. Whatever proficiency one has should impart it to others and learn whatever is conceivable. Initiate knowledge even to older people. Teach them devotional songs, narrate lessons from Gita or teach them whatever you can. I don't personally believe in school education. Children cannot be educated by sitting in class for 5 or 6 hours. I suggest that various types of vocational activities should be pursued and one or two hours in between that training are sufficient for teaching. Mathematics or other subjects should be taught in between working time. Promotion to senior classes should be in proportion to the increase in earnings. As the earning rises so should be promoted to the next class. They should be taught in such a way that education and vocation go on simultaneously.

Once my mother was reading '*Bhakti-Marg-Pradeep*.' She was not proficient in reading, so she was reading leisurely. One day she spent 15 minutes reading one devotional song. I noticed her reading like this. So, I came to help her read that song properly without hindrance. Since then, I regularly taught her something from that book and helped her complete that book. So, keep teaching others whatever you can and learn from life as well. This is not an easy task for all. But Bhakti and pursuit can be followed by all, and they should do it. I do not find any other pleasure except pursuing self-satisfaction and imparting knowledge to others.



It's a myth that you can't have it all. You can have it all—just maybe not all at the same time. - Eva Longoria



Prayers are Granted According to the Intensity of Invocation – 2

A person's attitude towards God determines how he sees Him

The majority of people run after worldly success and material benefits, as they are easy to achieve. But one has to struggle alone to refine one's inner-self and augment soul power. This requires inner discipline and relatively more control over the mind.

Usually, it is observed that people worship Gods (*Devatas*) with material desires at heart. Such people do get power, prosperity, and position. But the Lord says that these are nothing as compared with salvation. Gods cannot give salvation, as it is not in their jurisdiction. Only the Supreme Soul can provide '*Kaivalya Mukti*' (self-realization). That is why selfless action is considered excellent. This purifies the soul. Pujya Gurudev used to say, 'Spirituality is a science. It professes whenever you pray to God, you should request precious things. Precious is self-refinement – self-upliftment. Ordinary people get satisfied by smaller gifts/achievements.'

The book titled 'Guruvar ki Dharohar' is based on the discourses of Pujya Gurudev. In its first part, in one sermon, Pujyavar says, 'The person who has taught you that spirituality is cajolery of gods/goddesses, sycophancy of Guru and flattery of Siddha Purushas and without earning anything, without doing hard work, only by the artful movement of the tongue, garlanding them and offering *sawa rupaya* (little money) you can get everything, then you should consider that he is a wrong man. You are more wrong than him who believed such things. This world is

based on rules and is sustaining due to the discipline.'

The outcomes of actions with and without desire

Yogeshwar Krishna is trying to push Arjuna towards '*Karma Sanyas*' (selfless action) by explaining the outcomes of actions with and without desires. He is elaborating on '*Karmaṇā siddhim yajante*' where he says, 'whether you worship *preta-pitar* or *devatas*, you may get *tamsik* or *sattvic siddhi*; but that will be at the worldly level. But when someone lives selfless life according to God's will, his desires end.' So, this *śloka* is giving the message of living a desireless life.

There was a Japanese woman saint, Isunu. She would not eat daily; sometimes, she would not eat for fifteen days, but this did not affect her body. She would ask God – 'Should I take food today?' If she got the answer in affirmation, she would take food; otherwise, not. One day she said, 'My God is calling me.' She had her last supper, and then she willingly left for heavenly abode. This is called a God-surrendered life. That woman saint



It is often easier to make progress on mega-ambitious dreams. Since no one else is crazy enough to do it, you have little competition. - Larry Page



ate for God, lived for God, and talked straight to God. When we do fasting, we start counting the days. But she was beyond counting. That is why she got merged in Supreme Soul.

Division based on *Guna-Karma*

In the thirteenth *śloka*, Lord says –

*Cāturvarṇyam mayā sṛṣṭim
guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ |*

*Tasya karttarmapi mām
viddhyakartāramvyayam || (13/4)*

Meaning: The four divisions of human order were created by Me according to the differences in *Guna* (qualities) and *Karma* (activities); although I am the author thereof, know Me as the non-doer and immutable.

Lord says that based on the qualities and aptitude for activities of human beings, I have created four divisions. This division is not based on caste. It can be understood as follows. People who are keen to learn and have taken birth with a resolve to explore the mysteries of nature, disseminate this knowledge to society, and spread spiritual knowledge among the masses are Brahmins. Quoting Manusmṛiti, Pujya Gurudev said, ‘Everyone is Shudra by birth, but the righteous *sanskaras* (impressions) make a person Brahman.’ Who is Shudra? He is the one who has the aptitude for hard work. Hard work fetches money. Management of wealth and its proper

distribution is the dharma of Vaishya. When the prosperity of society increases, there is a need for its protection. This work is done by the Kshatriya class. Beyond this, when a person rises above the worldly aspects and his desire for earning knowledge intensifies, he becomes a Brahman.

Pujya Gurudev said, ‘We will make everyone a Brahman through Gayatri. One who imbibes the philosophy of Gayatri in his life, starts with hard work and earns money, utilizes it for augmenting health, happiness, and power, and finally tries to achieve self-realization will naturally become a Brahman.’ Had Einstein been alive today, he would have been called a Brahman (and not Christian). Seer Parashuram was a Brahman by caste but Kshatriya by activities. Gandhiji was a Vaishya, but considering his actions, he should be called a Brahman as well as Kshatriya. The old belief was that a person born in a specific caste would die in the same caste. Pujyavar said, ‘This is not so. Brahmanhood is a *siddhi* (accomplishment) whose royal path starts from hard work and ultimately reaches the destination of achieving supreme knowledge.’

According to Swami Vivekananda, ‘A person who possesses *Satoguna* (virtuous tendencies) is called a Brahman. Intellectuals, thinkers, scientists, and discoverers come under this category. *Rajoguna* is a sign of dynamism and activity. A person is called Vaishya when *Rajoguna* is prominent, *Tamoguna* is sufficiently present, but *Satoguna* is less. Business people come under this category. The prominence of lower-level desires is counted as *Tamoguna*. When this *guna* is prominent, a person is called Shudra. Craftsmen, artisans, laborers, etc., come under this category. When *Rajoguna* is prominent, *Satoguna* is sufficiently present, but *Tamoguna* is less, a person is called Kshatriya. Diligent, energetic people, politicians, etc., come under this category.’



Keep some room in your heart for the unimaginable. - Mary Oliver



Not by birth but by action

The four divisions of Human beings are not based on the caste they are born. Today, the inequality seen in society has been created by the poison of casteism spread by the vested interests of the people. Lord says that all the four *Varnas* (classes) are based on people's *gunas* and *karmas*. 'The *Varna* system is a scientific, universal, and natural classification; but the distorted, entangled religion and immoral perversion – they are all our mind's ugliness,' – So says Swami Chinmayananda.

In this famous *śloka*, Lord also says that being the conscious element in everyone's heart, he is the power behind all the activities of human beings, whether they are doing sacred work or indulging in sin. Even then, He is a non-doer and immutable (*mām viddhyakartāramvyayam*). Our lustful inner desires are visible in our outer selves. The refinement of such urges and imbibing the virtues leads to the spiritual upliftment of the human self. This is the message of Lord Shrikrishna.

The eleventh *Richa* of *Purusha Sukta* of Yajurveda mentions –
Brāhmaṇo'sya mukhamāsīt, bāhū rājanyaḥ kṛtaḥ |
ūrū'tadasya yad vaiśyaḥ, padbhyām śūdroajāyata || (31.11)
Meaning: Brahman was born from the mouth, Kshatriya from the arms, Vaishya from the abdomen, and Shudra from the feet of That Supreme Purusha Brahma.

The essence is that Brahmans preach about righteous knowledge, dharma, and action. That is why they are like the mouth of society. Those who protect the country by their muscle power are known as Kshatriyas; the Veda calls them the arms of society. People who provide food, clothing, etc., to the community are called Vaishyas; they are, therefore, akin to the abdomen. Those who keep society active, and serve it, are like its feet. The seer of the Veda has not called any category high or low. Of course, this is a pilgrimage of reaching the soul realization, which starts from physical labor and ends at Tapa-dominated life. All four classes are equal; all of them have utility in their places.

[To be continued]

[Note: This is the translation of the Hindi version of 'Yug Gita' (Part 2) by Dr. Pranav Pandya, published by Shri Vedmata Gayatri Trust, Shantikunj, Haridwar (2011)]

Life is meant to be enjoyed. Sure, I agree with this statement (as many of us would), but the problem is this is used to justify all kinds of crappy behavior. You might as well scarf down those Doritos and Twinkies, because hey, life is meant to be enjoyed, right? No. You can do without junk food and still enjoy life. You can exercise and enjoy it. You can give up pretty much anything and still enjoy life if you learn to see almost any activity as enjoyable.

- Leo Babauta



I think the more unexpected something is, the more there is to learn from it. - Michael J. Fox



Let Us Revive the Parivrājaka Tradition for Social Upliftment

(English version of some excerpts of a discourse given by Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya)
Revered Gurudev, Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya, was a sagacious pioneer of scientific spirituality. He was a great saint, seer-sage, social reformer, patriot, and eminent writer. Many of his distinguished multifaceted contributions are like epochal gifts for a brighter future of humanity. These include revival and dissemination of the ancient Indian Culture in progressive light in a relevant and practical way for today's society's welfare. The present discourse illustrates this in the context of the tradition of voluntarily becoming a parivrājaka. Going by the word meaning, many people today consider a parivrājaka as someone who becomes a monk or a hermit who wanders in the forests or from one pilgrimage place to the other and survives on alms. The present discourse would uproot such misconceptions. It is addressed to the participants of a training session at Shantikunj, Haridwar, to revive the "Parivrājaka Tradition." It elucidates the objectives and multiple aspects of reviving the parivrājaka tradition in terms of self-refinement, dissemination of knowledge, and social welfare.

Sisters and Brothers,

I welcome you all to the parivrājaka session.

Let us begin with a collective chant of the Gayatri Mantra:

*"Om Bhūr Bhuvah Swah,
 Tatsaviturvareṇyam Bhargo Devasya
 Dhīmahi, Dhiyo Yonah Prachodayāt ||"*

The parivrājaka tradition was instituted in our ancient cultural system, mainly for an altruistic purpose. Our objective is to revive and propagate this benevolent tradition in a righteous way suitable and needed in the present

times. As you have come to participate in this session, I am sure you have the spirit of offering your services for social welfare. You must have it. But do you know the interesting point that becoming a parivrājaka has personal benefits as well? How? Well, I will discuss this point first, as most people in today's society are often keen to know how something would fulfill their self-interests.

A primary benefit (and also a prerequisite) of becoming a parivrājaka is good health, physical fitness. Some of you might be aware of the Hindi magazine titled "Arogya." It provides general information on preventive healthcare and home-remedies, etc. In one of its issues, there was an article by Shri Kailash Joshi, a former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh. There he had shared his personal experience on health improvement without any medication. It seems he



Whenever it feels uncomfortable to tell the truth, that's often the most important time to tell it. - Jennifer Lopez



used to have several health-related problems at a younger age due to chronic digestive problems.

Once, he suffered severe stomach upset. He took medicines (as per the doctors' prescription), tried several other treatments, but nothing helped. In order to try some natural therapy, he wrote to the editor of "Arogya" magazine for necessary information/guidance. The latter asked him to come to the naturopathy/alternate therapy center at Gorakhpur on foot. Mr. Joshi followed his advice and traveled from his residence (in Indore) to Gorakhpur on foot. He stayed there for several days and took the treatment, as per the experts' advice. He was not the chief minister at that time, so he could afford to stay away from work for several days. Finally, he felt better, and on his way back (from Gorakhpur to Indore), he again walked on his feet. He experienced that walking a long distance (several kilometers every day) has not only cured his digestive system but has also made him physically fit in general.

Indeed, walking is the best exercise for physical fitness. Several other activities and modes of fitness are also there, but walking is the best, as it is the easiest mode of exercise of all components of the body and a naturally effective, cost-free method of fitness for everybody. Mahatma Gandhi often used to recommend it to his colleagues and followers. In his views, one may compromise on some other activity (if the circumstances, e.g., busy schedule so demand), but should not skip his regular walk (stroll) for good health.

I have also followed this discipline throughout my life. Two activities (along with the spiritual endeavors of upāsana and sādhanā) have always been an integral part of my daily routine; these are swādhyāya and walking. Swādhyāya is a necessary exercise for a healthy, aware, and active mind. Regular (and rigorous) walking exercise is essential for a fit

and energetic body. Some of you may wonder that most of the time, I live here upstairs, then where do I walk? Well, it is not necessary to walk on a specific kind of track, ground, or road; if one is determined, one can very well walk (at a constant pace for a specific time without any pause) repeatedly from one end to the other of a terrace, or a room for a particular duration.

Tale of a Hakim of Bagdad

In this context, I recall the story of a Hakim (doctor of traditional Arabian medicines) who lived in Bagdad. He was famous in all Arabic countries that he could cure all kinds of otherwise incurable diseases. But one thing was peculiar about him; except for the patient for whom it was impossible to walk on their own feet, he used to see a patient only if (s)he had reached him walking on foot.

Hakim's popularity spread over time to many other countries as well. Some relatives of a wealthy landlord in a neighboring country also heard about this famous Hakim. The landlord could not eat and sleep well and had several health problems for a long time. In spite of spending a lot of money, he was not able to get adequate medical treatment. So, some of his relatives advised him to go to this Hakim of Bagdad. Seeing no other option, the



And now that you don't have to be perfect, you can be good. - John Steinbeck



landlord walked on foot slowly (with some stops on the way) and reached Hakim's home/clinic. He was told that, like every day, the Hakim has taken his camels for grazing and will return only in the evening. So, the landlord walked again; it took a lot of time to search from one forest (of shrubs and date trees) to another. At last, he found the Hakim with his camels on his way back.

The Hakim looked so energetic and happy that seeing him generated hope in the patient (the landlord) and reduced his fatigue from the tiresome journey and hectic search. "I have come from a long distance to take your advice and medicines," said the visitor. "Sure, I will examine you and try to give you the best possible medicine/treatment I can" Hakim politely welcomed him."

"You are a successful and famous Hakim; so many patients must be visiting you! You must be so busy! Why do you look after the camels yourself instead of assigning this job to an assistant?" – was a natural query in the visitor's mind. The Hakim smiled and said — I will be able to cure other's health problems only if I remain in good health. Taking the camels for grazing is an excellent fitness exercise for me; as you might know, a camel keeps moving from one tree/shrub to another; it would eat a few leaves from

one tree then move away to some other arbitrarily. Perhaps, this way, it also digests its food easily. Thus, walking behind all these camels to guard them when they are grazing from one forest to other is quite perspiring. It is like a brisk walk for me; it keeps me fit.

During this conversation, Hakim also asked the visitor about his health problems and attentively listened to him. After reaching home, he thoroughly examined the patient (the wealthy landlord who had arrived from another country) and asked some questions concerning the latter's complaints — e.g., since when do you have diabetes, sleep disorder, backache, obesity, etc.? Then he took out several medicinal powders from his stock, took out small amounts of each and thoroughly mixed them. He then divided the mixture into thirty parts and packed them in thirty tiny puḍiyās (pieces of folded paper).

He said — "Eat one puḍiyā (the medicinal powder kept in it) every day. Don't mix water, honey, milk, or any other liquid usually prescribed with dry medicinal powder. You should keep one puḍiyā in your pocket when you go for a walk; you may walk briskly for some time so that you start getting a sweat on your forehead; collect a drop or two of it on your palm, mix the powder (of the puḍiyā) in it, and gulp leisurely". The landlord carefully collected the medicines and happily returned home.

The landlord strictly followed the instructions of Hakim. In thirty days, he became perfectly healthy and fit. He revisited the Hakim to express his gratitude and offer some expensive reward. "I had been suffering for more than a decade, have spent a huge sum on various treatments. You have magically cured me. I want to honor you. Please, if you don't mind, kindly tell me about your medicines, so that these may be given to the other needy who may not be able to reach



You never go wrong when you take the high road—it's less crowded up there. - Gayle King



you”. The Hakim laughed loudly... and said — “It’s not my medicine, but your regular brisk-walk, which has cured you. The puḍiyās contained nothing but a mix of fine dust of some soils.”

He further explained in a layman’s terminology that — the root cause of your health problems/complaints was the lack of adequate physical exercise and excess of comforts. When you walk briskly, all the nerves, veins, and muscles (esp. those in your stomach) also move. The excessive calories stored as fat and glucose (sugar) in the blood also get consumed and converted into sweat.

So, you see the point? It was the sweat produced by hard work, not that generated simply by sitting near heat or sitting under the sun, which had cured all diseases of that rich man. Let me repeat it, the key to fitness and good health is regular and balanced physical exercise. Regular walk (preferably a thorough brisk walk, if one is fatty, lives a cozy life, and/or eats lavishly) strolling about 3 to 4 kilometers per day on an average, in a relaxed mood, is a universal and easiest mode for such a fitness exercise.

Walking-Exercise Is an Integral Part of Parivrājaka Training: If you are not generally keeping in good health, you are weak, prone to fall sick with every change of season, have a problem in digestion, or are not able to work hard, then you must start taking this medicine I have prescribed. Well, I am not going to give any placebo treatment like the puḍiyās of the Hakim of Bagdad. I have directly told you about this medicine; I have been emphasizing its importance so far. Yes, this medicine or the universal key to keeping fit is — start walking regularly. As far as possible, you should also do a brisk walk in the morning; it is also a must for some time after dinner. You all are adults; I don’t have to give you more guidance on how to do this; you should plan and adjust

your schedule to accommodate this exercise along with your daily chores.

The habit of a long walk or tracking on foot is essential for a parivrājaka. We will give you its practice during your training session here, and it will also be an integral part of your internship. It will help you keep fit. It is also essential, as the real purpose of mass-contact, mass-awakening, and mass-upliftment through our parivrājaka mission will not be served if you use some vehicle or some other mode of travel while working as a parivrājaka.

(To be continued in the next issue)

Notes:

1. Parivrājaka: In the truest sense of the word, parivrājakas are supposed to be spiritually enlightened, cultured people who would disseminate their knowledge acquired from the spiritual saints/sages/yogis and also share their experience gained in the laboratory of life, among the masses. They are supposed to live a nomadic life like hermits and contribute to the improvement and all-round development of the people they would meet and interact with at different places.



You’ll never get bored when you try something new. There’s really no limit to what you can do. – Dr. Seuss



Can Challenges be the Steppingstones to Progress?

Life can be defined in many ways, one of which is facing challenges and making them a ladder for progress. What is the significance of life without challenges and struggles? Only by struggling amid adversities, a person could come up shining like pure gold and spread his timeless radiance all around with his credibility.

A sedentary life, which is devoid of challenges, and which refrains from strife, fades away with time and loses its luster without realizing its inherent potentials, and eventually remains devoid of the endless opportunities affiliated with human life. However, facing every challenge and moving forward is also not easy.

The apparent primary response to challenges is that of fear and escape. It seems as if the problem will wreak havoc by becoming a threat to our existence. With this apprehension, the intellect becomes crippled, which affects the decisions of life adversely. In this state of mind, which is driven by fear and insecurity, one often takes such short-sighted decisions, for which

he has to repent later. As a result, he could himself feel a decline from his dignified position, and his life gets subverted by the feeling of paucity, inferiority, and infirmity. Also, he becomes trapped in the distorted devious ploys because he cannot handle the challenges properly.

This also increases the risk of indulging in the vicious circles of mutual dissension, discord, envy-hatred, and collusions of the rivals. The natural, unopposed development of the individual gets obstructed somewhere. However, challenges do not come for this purpose. On the contrary, they come to enhance the inherent capabilities of the person.

If these challenges are dealt with prudence and courage, they will serve as the steps to progress and prosperity. Challenges can be considered a kind of divine gift, which comes not to destroy or ruin the person but to make him stronger. They come to indicate one's intrinsic frailties, shortcomings, and flaws, highlight his slackness of efforts, awaken him from ignorance, and open the gateway to his inherent infinite possibilities. These challenges allude to the imperfections of life so that one can materialize his intrinsic potentials and consciously move forward on the path to perfection while imbibing the necessary virtues.

Thus, in order to turn challenges into the ladder of development and progress, the first step is to perceive them as your benefactor and accept them readily. Confront the debilitating feelings of fear and doubt associated with them. Then, understand the significant message contained in them and use these indications to make a concrete plan of action



Do not wait until the conditions are perfect to begin. Beginning makes the conditions perfect. – Alan Cohen



to acquire the required caliber and capabilities and move towards the desired goal.

Having the courage to accept the challenges is essential in this context. People with a fearless attitude keep waiting for such challenges; perhaps they even invite them. They happily accept them with open hands and make the sojourn of life quite exciting. By responding to them appropriately, they move towards a worthy life.

Someone has rightly said that while challenges make life interesting, overcoming them makes it meaningful. In fact, nothing can be more contenting than the feeling of giving a befitting reply to the circumstances challenging the truth, righteousness, and integrity of existence. However, in doing so, one also needs to be cautious so that he may not get entangled in the intricate flow of the world while responding to these challenges.

It is essential to know the highway leading to the holistic development of life and imbibe the spirit to reach the destination patiently without deviating from the righteous path. When striving with challenges in this way, one has to fight on double fronts. While the external challenges indicate the inner debilities, the inherent flaws in one's nature also come before him as a significant challenge.

The inclination of senses towards their subjects, the pleasure-craving attitude of the mind, the attachments and

aversions, egoism, and mental imprints of weaknesses make the struggle of life fierce. In such a situation, a person has to deal with challenges on double fronts. They cannot be adequately resolved without a spiritual understanding. Proper understanding of human nature becomes crucial in this situation, which could develop through the company of spiritual mentors, by reading idealistic literature, and through profound thinking and contemplation.

With a spiritual outlook, it becomes easier to respond to life's external and internal challenges. However, while facing and overcoming the challenges, we have to be careful that our steps are firm on truth, full of righteousness, and are associated with the sentiments of universal well-being.

In this way, by keeping faith in one's inner self and feeling in the company of God at every moment, every challenge becomes a part of the solution and becomes a ladder for overall progress and leads one towards the eternal goal of life's entirety.

The chief beauty about time is that you cannot waste it in advance. The next year, the next day, the next hour is lying ready for you, as perfect, as unspoiled, as if you had never wasted or misapplied a single moment in all your life. You can turn over a new leaf every hour if you choose. - **Arnold Bennett**



Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely. – Karen Kaiser Clark



Ensure Comprehensive Development of Villages

India is a rurally-dominant nation with 72% of its population living in villages, and most of it depends on agriculture. Hence, when we talk about national growth, the development of villages and agriculture becomes significant. For centuries villages have been the core of India's life. In fact, they are the soul of a nation. India owes its existence to its millions of villages that nourish its urban population and where distinctive evolutionary features within our eternal culture incessantly flourish by natural process despite epochal disturbances.

India's villages have always been self-dependent units having underlying support from agriculture, animal husbandry, conventional industries, and their inherent community system. They were independent and self-reliant, appropriately utilizing indigenous resources. When Britishers came, they weakened this autonomous, self-sustaining system of villages and dominated control over it. They announced certain directives and rulings harnessing this community system and chose local leaders as their representatives to exercise control on

villages and constrained the conventional community system to depend on the British administration system.

After independence, Indian legislation came into force, but development policies remained the same, centered on urbanization instead of rural development. Its consequences are now evident to all. After passing seven decades of post-independence, a profound difference has developed between towns and villages. As a result, villages are squeezing, and towns are overburdened with population.

In the post-independence period, large industries were encouraged instead of supporting conventional small sectors. Thus, despite witnessing onward movement under Green Revolution due to massive mechanization and increased use of chemical fertilizers, its benefit too was taken by a specific group. As a result, the gap between the poor and rich widened.

Conventional traits like the dignity of labor, self-reliance, and self-esteem prevailing in society gradually diminished. Today's mentality is so spoiled that none wants to do labor-oriented jobs. An educated young denigrates work for wages and feels high in serving even as a clerk. Despite the easy, simple, and toiling life of rural regions, he acknowledges cities' indigent and frustrated life as his destiny.

After adherence to prominent industries in the name of development, we witnessed liberalization when multinationals made their way into the country. Their radiance pushed back the skill-oriented conventional sector of rural



Life's not about expecting, hoping, and wishing; it's about doing, being, and becoming. – Mike Dooley



India, and most of them are now irrelevant. Simultaneously self-reliant system of villages based on mutual cooperation was also ruined. Consequently, this situation forced migration to urban areas in search of employment. In some provinces, the situation has become so terrible that only women and the aged are left in villages, and educated ones are all settled in towns and reluctant to return. How can we justify the nation's growth as balanced and satisfactory in such a desolate rural life?

Because of the large-scale use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and processed seeds to yield a maximum harvest, water, land, air, environment all are under the threat of pollution. Fruits, vegetables, and other edible stuff have become toxic, and as a result, a large population is cursed to bear terrible consequences. Environmental balance is under threat due to the massive exploitation of natural resources. Worldly attractions have made man greedier. Man today is straying away from his cultural roots and nature and, despite the material progress, finds himself under dilapidated condition. In this context, whatever is achieved in the name of development shows that we have lost more than what we have gained.

This all scenario reveals a dire need for comprehensive development that can ensure overall growth of rural and urban regions, and benefits of this development do not remain confined to a specific class or person but reach lower level farmers as well.

Time has come when we reconsider rural life's importance and return to villages where a functional infrastructure may be initiated to facilitate long-lasting development with a harmonious relationship with nature. We should dedicatedly put efforts to nourish it and refrain from exploiting it. Instead of destroying the protective layers of nature, let us preserve them and enjoy the bliss of versatile development.

Visualizing the inevitabilities associated with extensive rural development, revered Gurudev had presented innovative solutions and benevolent ideology. He had predicted that population pressure would cease from cities and feeble villages would evolve into smaller towns with a solid infrastructure. Banking facilities hitherto available for large industries will soon be available for small and cottage industries in villages. An extensive infrastructure of cottage industries under the aegis of cooperative societies would come up in villages and towns. He had a firm belief that the future belongs to villages and summoned all to come back to villages.

Our Mission has already outlined a comprehensive development framework under the seven-point program - *sadhana*, education, health, self-reliance, environmental protection, women empowerment, de-addiction, and eradicating evil customs in villages. Therefore, the volunteers of All World Gayatri Pariwar should initiate significant steps to ensure the comprehensive development of villages by enforcing these seven movements in villages.



Although no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending. – Carl Bard



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Glimpses of the visit of His Highness President of India, Sri Ramnath Kovind to Shantikunj and DSVV, Haridwar



The famous narrator of scriptures, saint Sri Sudhanshu Maharaj, visited Shantikunj and paid floral tributes at Samadhi Sthal of Pujya Gurudev



Honorable Sri Shivraj Singh, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, delivered a lecture at DSVV, Under the auspices of Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Shantikunj, Haridwar

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